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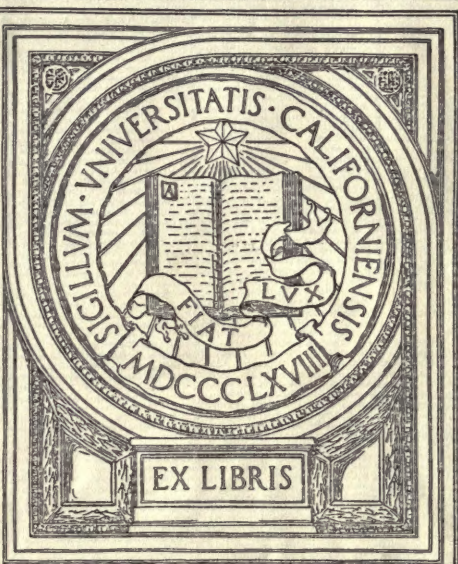


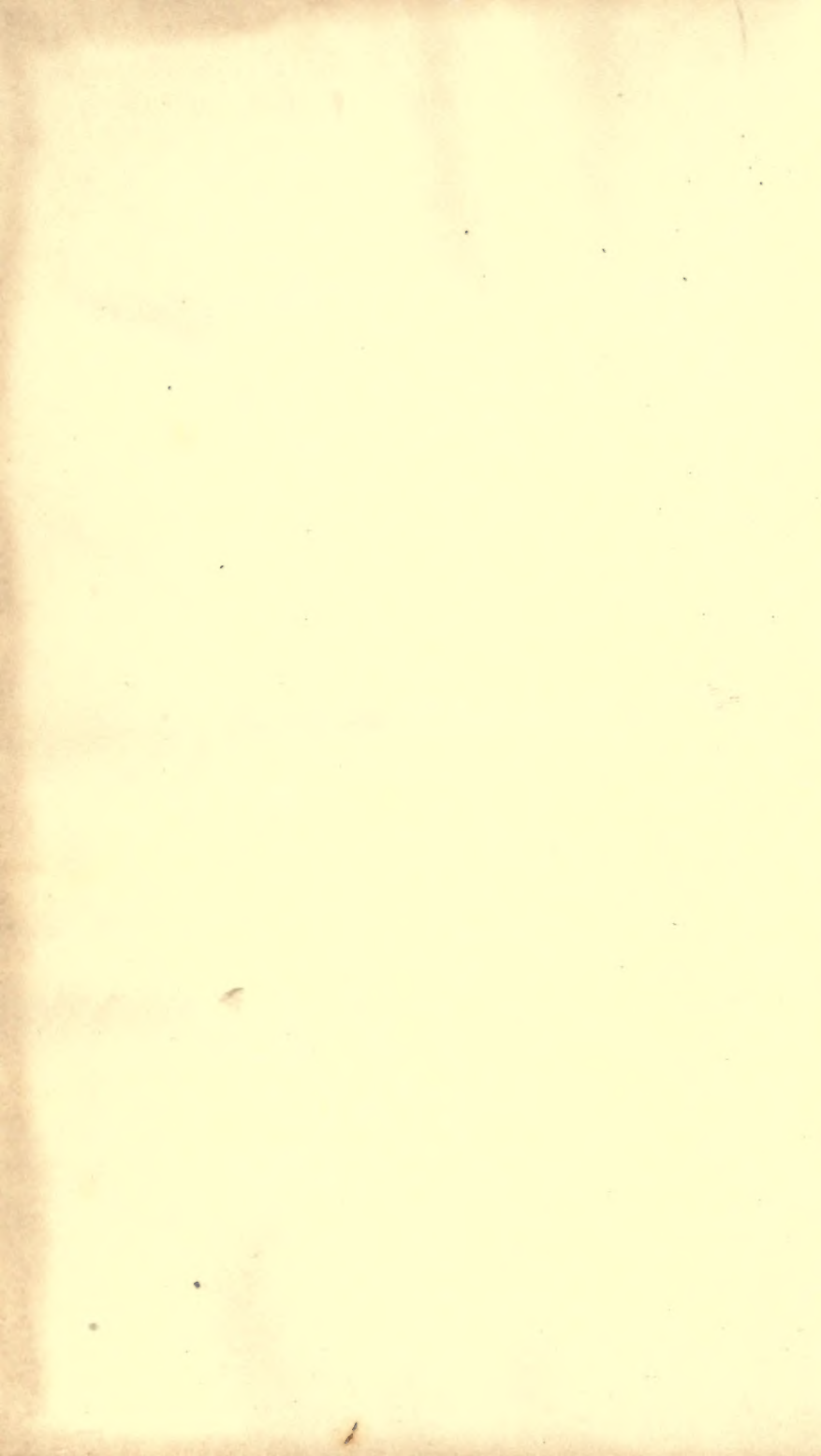
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S P E E C H E S
OF THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

VOL. III.



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THE
S P E E C H E S
OF THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

With a Sketch of his Life.

EDITED BY
A CONSTITUTIONAL FRIEND.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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HENRY G. BOHN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

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S P E E C H E S

OF THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

NOVEMBER 27, 1795.

TREASON AND SEDITION BILLS.

MR. SHERIDAN presented a petition from his own constituents, the inhabitants of Stafford, against the bills. He had a general recollection of their names, and, from the signatures, he was sure that the petition contained the general sense of the inhabitants.

Mr. Sheridan next presented a petition against the bill from the gentlemen and burgesses of Newcastle-under-Lyne, where the mayor was not averse to the petition, nor was there one person in the town dissenting from it. As the petition, therefore, passed unanimously, and both the representatives of the town were adverse to it, Mr. Sheridan said, the inhabitants had done him the honour to commit it to his care.

Mr. Sheridan next presented a petition against the bills, from a number of mechanics who had not an opportunity of signing the petition from the associated tradesmen. To those 15,000 names, therefore, might be added the 832 affixed to this petition. It came from the journeymen gun-makers, which of course, he said, the gentlemen on the opposite side would deem very alarming !

Sir John Frederick presented a petition from the clergy, freeholders, and inhabitants of the county of Surrey, signed by 200 persons.

Mr. Sheridan observed, that this petition was a strong censure upon the bills ; for though the petitioners stated, that they understood some acts were at present under the consideration of

parliament, the purpose of which they evidently knew, as appeared by the subsequent part of the petition, they requested remedy for the evils of which they complained, without destroying the liberties of the people, or entrenching upon the right of petitioning, and the free exercise of speech.

Mr. William Smith presented a petition against the bills from the inhabitants of Aldersgate ward. He complained of the conduct of Alderman Anderson, who resided in that ward, and refused to convene a meeting of the inhabitants to consider the two bills in question.

Mr. Alderman Anderson justified himself by saying, that he had lived long in the ward, and had an opportunity of knowing most of the inhabitants; out of thirty-one who signed the requisition he did not know more than four or five. As the purport of the bills had been amply discussed before, by the representatives of the ward in the common council, he thought it unnecessary to consult the inhabitants, and told the persons so who waited on him for that purpose, and they replied, that they were more anxious to do it, because Mr. Pitt had been minister for a great many years, and they thought it was now high time for Mr. Fox to be so.—[A loud laugh.]

Mr. Sheridan could not suffer such levity to gloss over the conduct of the hon. gentleman, who, however long his residence might have been in the ward, or however universal his acquaintance with the inhabitants, was compelled by duty, on receiving a requisition of that nature, to inquire who the persons were who signed it; and not to refuse their request because he had no personal acquaintance with them. The hon. gentleman had refused it also, because the representatives of the ward in common council had already discussed the tendency of the bills, and delivered their opinions on them; but what kind of reasoning was this, and how would it apply to that house, if, because the representatives of the people may have happened to have passed a law, which, for argument's sake, may be supposed directly opposite to the interests, happiness, and prosperity of the kingdom, the people are no longer to have an opinion about it? He subscribed to the declaration of his hon. friend (Mr. Smith), that such proceedings were the strongest arguments that could be used against the bills, and quoted the instance, not only of the high sheriff of York, but of Northumberland also; and asked whether, after the bills have passed, they or the hon. gentleman would think it their duty to attend that public meeting which they had refused to call? He merely quoted these as instances of the abuses which were likely to follow the passing of the bills; and observed, that

it was remarkable when one magistrate (Mr. Le Mesurier) stated a common hall to be an improper mode of obtaining the sense of the people, and that there could be no appeal but to the decision of the several wards, that now the requisition for making that appeal should not be allowed. But as the public meeting at Westminster, so did the common hall of London, express the general sense of the people; and it was not only confirmed by that petition, signed by 200 inhabitants of one ward, and the petition he had presented, signed by 1700 inhabitants of the ward of Farringdon Without, but he trusted it would be confirmed by every other ward in the ratio of five to one.

Mr. Sheridan presented a petition from 1200 of the inhabitants of Clerkenwell, which was signed in twelve hours, against the bills; and if there had been more time, there would have been a much greater number, but they acted under the same impression with many other people, that if the petition was not immediately presented, it could not be received at all.

Mr. Sheridan said, that it was found extremely difficult to proceed with proper dispatch in the committee of inquiry upon the pamphlet entitled, "Thoughts on Government," on account of the slow and careful manner, he supposed, in which the gentlemen of that house ate their breakfast. He, therefore moved, that the committee be extended, and that Mr. Howard, General Macleod, Mr. Lambton, Mr. Church, Mr. St. John, Mr. Hare, Sir William Milner, Mr. Maurice Robinson, Mr. Crespigny, &c., be added thereto.

The motion was put and carried, as was a motion, "That it be an instruction to the committee to sit to-morrow." The house then resolved itself into a committee on the bill for preventing seditious meetings and assemblies.

Mr. Sheridan said, the purpose of his attending was not to propose any alterations in the bill, for he was fully persuaded that no alteration, but negating each and every clause of it, could make it palatable to the majority of the people. He attended to watch some things which were going forward. The object of this bill was said to be to prevent seditious meetings and tumultuous assemblies; and he was now convinced, more than ever, that this bill would not answer that purpose. It would not prevent the discussion of the question of peace and war, or the conduct and capacity of ministers to carry on the war; neither would it give to ministers the security which they wanted, though this, indeed,

was the very foundation of the bill, to which, for the purpose of deluding the people, they had given another title. It was calculated to give a security against any public deliberation of the people on the misconduct of ministers. By this bill 400,000 persons, or any number, might assemble and deliberate at Copenhagen House, or in an open field, and there they might canvass the question of war and peace; the whole conduct of ministers; and hold what language they pleased, whether temperate or intemperate, to recommend peace, or even to withhold supplies; and under the authority of this bill, no justice of peace would have any power to interfere with, or to attempt to disperse them, or even to interrupt their proceedings. Gentlemen might wonder how this could happen. He would tell them:—By this bill any number of persons might meet for the purpose of examining and considering any depending law; this they could not avoid in the bill according to the principle on which its authors pretended to proceed. Every supply bill offered to that house—and scarce a week passed without such bills—was a depending law; and, according to this act, the people might meet and discuss it; and, under the discussion of a bill for granting a supply to his Majesty, they might discuss the whole conduct of the king's ministers, and whether they ought not to be removed from his Majesty's service. It was a bill rather to encourage and provoke, than to suppress tumultuous meetings and assemblies. He did not mention this in order that any new clause should be inserted, but to show the inefficacy of the bill; and also by way of notice of what ground he should hereafter take when this bill came out of the committee, in order that there should be no colour for saying afterwards that he took an unmanly part in the way he should oppose the bill in its future stages.

Mr. Pitt having replied to Mr. Sheridan,

Mr. Sheridan said, he was glad to hear the right hon. gentleman had taken what he said as a notice of what he should do hereafter upon this bill. He need not wonder he was now a little sneered at by that right hon. gentleman, about lending the aid of his abilities to any measure, for he had been more than once reproached for having given himself so much trouble to mend so many of his bad bills. He seemed to forget the nature of the case now before parliament. Suppose Mr. Thelwall, or any other person, was to call a meeting at Copenhagen House, when

a bill of supply was to be voted in parliament, and that instead of three there should be ten tribunals erected, from whence to harangue the populace, could anything be more regular in the discussion of a supply bill, than to enter into the circumstances of the war, the distressed situation of the country, and the misconduct of ministers in the course of it? it was the constant course of debating in parliament. There was no ingenuity required upon the subject; the company so assembled would soon find out the incapacity and the tyrannical disposition of ministers; and that these were the sources of the misfortunes and calamities of this country. He said that advantage would be taken of this bill, in order to do the very thing which ministers affected to prevent. The people would avail themselves of it, because they were provoked to it by the tyrannical and absurd restrictions imposed upon them by the present bill. He should state this more at large hereafter. Whether ministers would hereafter bring in another bill upon this subject, he knew not; but he was sure this was inadequate to the object for which it was proposed to be brought forward.

DECEMBER 3.

TREASON AND SEDITION BILLS.

Mr. Mainwaring presented a petition from the churchwardens, minister, sidesman, overseers, commissioners of paving, guardians of the poor, &c., in Clerkenwell parish, whose names were all obtained, he said, in a few hours, in support of the bills.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that the churchwarden and sidesman who subscribed this petition, were in the singular number, for there was only one churchwarden out of four, one sidesman out of four, and two overseers out of six who espoused it. Nothing could be more fair and open than the petition which he had the honour to present the other day against the convention bills, from the inhabitants of Clerkenwell parish; for a requisition was made by twenty-four housekeepers, to call a public meeting; a handbill, of which 4000 copies were distributed, was signed by twenty-six housekeepers; six respectable houses were open for the reception of signatures, and, in twelve hours, 1200 names were subscribed. Nothing could be more clandestine than the manner in which this petition was obtained, for it was privately prepared, and carried from door to door, where the poorer in-

habitants were terrified into a subscription by the appearance of the collectors of rates and taxes, and the public-houses by the appearance of a magistrate, who, at the next quarter sessions, might otherwise refuse a license. In the meantime it was a notorious fact, said Mr. Sheridan, that a week had been employed on this occasion.

Lord W. Russell presented a petition from the noblemen, gentlemen, clergy, freeholders, and other undersigned inhabitants of the county of Surrey, against the convention bills. The petition was subscribed by 6091 persons; regular notice had been given of the meeting, gentlemen of great ability on both sides of the question attended. There had been a minority at the meeting, which minority had entered into several resolutions, and had drawn up a petition which had been signed by about 2000 persons. Mr. T. Onslow conceived, that there were some floating particles in the atmosphere of the house, which, coming in contact with some gentlemen, produced in them a disorder called the *cacoethes loquendi*. These particles, he was happy to say, had not come in contact with him, and, therefore, he could assure the house that he would not trouble them with a long speech upon the subject. The petition that had been presented had been signed by above 6000 persons: the petition in favour of the bills by about 2000 persons. But he wished to know how many of those 6000 persons were freeholders of the county, and how much of the property of the county they represented?

Mr. Sheridan could not help being of opinion, that though Mr. Onslow had rebuked the practice of the *cacoethes loquendi*, he had not wholly refrained from it. To the wit of the hon. gentleman he had nothing to object, except that it seemed not to be without preparation. The joke about the dismissal of ministers the house had heard before. Though, therefore, the repetition of signatures to a petition might be a good thing, he never heard that the repetition deserved that praise. He was happy to hear it now avowed by the staunchest friends of the minister, that the surest way to procure the signatures and the suffrages of the people, was to represent that they would tend, in their consequences, to remove him from his situation. This was a truth which the minister himself had for some time been in the habit of hearing, but hearing with affected incredulity, from the opposition side of the house. Now, however, he could not well resist the conviction that flashed upon him, from the testimony of those adherents who were most tender of his interests. Of petitions, the hon. gentleman seemed to think that the sole excellence consisted in the weight of property which they represented. As to the system of measuring the value of a man's opinion by

the size of the freehold he possessed, it seemed founded on the philosophy of Sergeant Kite, who held in contempt "the opinion of any man that was not six feet high"—a doctrine which he supposed that hon. gentleman would be unwilling to subscribe to. In regard to this petition, it was certainly three times higher in the strength of its opinion than the other, because it contained three times the number of signatures, having 6000 to 2000. An hon. gentleman opposite had wished for accurate descriptions; he supposed he had taken the hint from a foreigner, whose name he observed in the petition in favour of the bills, which he begged the clerk to read.

The clerk read, "Alexander Dupont, propriétaire et fidele sujet du Roi d'Angleterre."

This person, Mr. Sheridan remarked, could not be a very disinterested petitioner, as, if he had refused to sign, he might have been liable to have been that moment turned out of the kingdom.

Alderman Harley presented a petition from Aldersgate ward in favour of the bills.

Mr. Le Mesurier said, he was rather an old inhabitant of the ward, and from the contrariety of opinions in it there was fear of tumult. He urged that this petition was signed by the greatest number of persons of property, while many of the signatures to the other were subscribed by persons who had tasted the hon. alderman's bounty during the hard frost.

Mr. Sheridan rose to allude to the speech of Alderman Le Mesurier. Many persons ought not, it had been said, to have signed that petition, because they had tasted the bounty of Mr. Anderson. Was this principle to be tolerated? Was this a condition to which the people of England ought to be reduced? Was humanity to be exerted for such purposes? Were the people, as soon as they tasted the bounties of the rich, to surrender from that moment all right of judgment and decision? There was, he hoped, but one man in the kingdom who would maintain such a doctrine.

Alderman Le Mesurier complained of misrepresentation; he had meant only that the persons who had partaken of Mr. Anderson's bounty ought not to have signed a petition against him. An alderman, Mr. Le Mesurier lamented, could not open his mouth, but he must be cavilled at.

Mr. Sheridan could not conceive why Mr. Le Mesurier should suppose him to be so great an enemy to aldermen.

The order of the day for the third reading of the bill for more effectually pre-

venting seditious assemblies was read. Mr. Harding spoke at considerable length in favour of the bill. Mr. M. Montagu followed.

Mr. Sheridan (who had risen at the same time with Mr. Montagu, but had given way) said, “The hon. gentleman (Mr. Harding) made so many direct allusions to me, that it could not appear surprising that, immediately on his sitting down, I should have risen to present myself to your notice. I am not sorry, however, that I was interrupted, as the last hon. speaker has pursued nearly the same line of argument, and, by replying to both, I shall be able to save the time and trouble of the house. The hon. gentleman having insinuated a great deal of blame to the opposition against the bill, has, by way of preserving the appearance of candour, thought proper to admit, that ministers have not been sufficiently alert in checking the progress of the evil which it has now become necessary to oppose; and that the magistrates have not been altogether free from blame, in not properly enforcing the authority attached to their functions. If this statement be just—if the evil does proceed from the inactivity and negligence of magistrates—what remedy does this bill afford for checking the proceedings of seditious meetings, or the circulation of dangerous libels? Instead of anything in the bill which is calculated to call forth their energy, and aid their exertions, it destroys the reverence of their authority, and opposes an obstacle to the discharge of their functions, by placing them in a situation of odium and suspicion with respect to the people, the effect of which, I venture to affirm, will be such, that when once the nature of this bill is properly explained, there is not one magistrate of respectability in this country who will choose to retain the office. It has been stated, that in a former debate, I took occasion to throw reflections on the characters of magistrates. On the contrary, there are many who fill the situation, whom I regard with the highest respect; but my objection to the magistrates of Westminster—to whom at that time I referred—was, that they were paid by ministers, and removable at pleasure. I have to return my thanks to the learned gentleman for many things which he addressed to me in the way of personal civility, and which, coming from him, I confess have great weight. I have, secondly, to thank him for taking up the question exactly in the point of view in which I wish to consider it—whether the necessity of the case is such as to call for the

measure now proposed to be adopted ? The learned gentleman took an opportunity to pay some compliments to the speech of another learned friend (Mr. Grant) on a preceding debate. That speech, in point of subtilty of discussion, lucid order, and neatness of language, I never heard surpassed within the walls of this house. But when I have paid to it this tribute, I must remark, that in this speech the two main points were omitted, and that amidst the abundance of other matter which the learned gentleman had introduced, he carefully avoided to touch either on the existence of the evil, or the fitness of the remedy. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Hardinge) said, that I thought I had done much to drive ministers from the grounds upon which they supported their present measure, when I called upon them to prove it. This appeal to proof he seems to consider as not at all entitled to have any weight as an argument. How the hon. gentleman, who, from his professional habits, is accustomed to receive nothing as fact which is not substantiated by evidence, should treat so lightly an appeal to proof, in the present instance, is, to me rather surprising. But the hon. gentleman thought proper to suppose himself in an extraordinary situation—that of arguing against himself and in favour of those who espoused the opposite side of the question. For my part, I regarded this as not in any matter extraordinary, since such I conceived to be the tenor of the hon. gentleman's arguments throughout the whole of his speech ; and that, however they might be directed against us, they were in reality calculated to favour the side of the question which we espoused. I must remark, however, that when the hon. gentleman, in opposition to his own views, took up the defence of the societies—no doubt from the habit which professional men have of alternately supporting the two sides of a question—he pleaded their cause in such a manner that, with all due respect to his talents, he should be the last man to whom I would recommend them to apply as clients. The hon. gentleman objects to my short call upon ministers—" Prove it ;" but has himself, from the particular emphasis which he attaches to brief expressions, laid great stress on the phrase " revolutionary principle." He contends, that this revolutionary principle has made greater progress in the country since the repeal of the suspension of the habeas corpus ; and when we deny the fact, and call upon ministers to prove it, he says that it is not to be

established by juridical proof. This is a sort of proof which we never required, nor expected in the present instance. I have only to refer him to what took place on the suspension of the habeas corpus ; no juridical proof was then proposed ; but ministers, by going into a secret committee, by bringing forward a mass of papers, and drawing up a report, attempted to establish that sort of prudential proof, which might serve as a ground for the measure which they then called on the house to adopt. It is not without good reason I call for proof. In the instance to which I now allude, and on other occasions, ministers have deceived me and the country, by reporting plots which were afterwards proved to have no existence, and circulating alarms which the event showed to be wholly unfounded. First, a rumour was spread over the country of an attempt to seize upon the Tower, &c., which those who were the most active in its circulation must have known to be untrue. Secondly, the existence of the plots, after the fullest legal investigation at the Old Bailey, was negatived by the verdicts of repeated juries. But, lastly, ministers had recourse to the miserable trumped-up plot to assassinate the king, by means of a poisoned arrow, which, though they must have been conscious had not the smallest foundation, they yet suffered to go abroad, in order to produce an impression on the country, and aid the purpose of alarm. I have been three times deceived, and they now call upon me to trust them without any show of proof whatever.

When the hon. gentleman asserts, that the danger arising from the propagation of certain principles has increased, I must remark, that he contradicts the express declaration of his Majesty's ministers at the commencement of the session. At that time, either ministers must have known that the danger had increased, or they must have since derived some new light upon the subject. What fresh information, I will ask, have they since acquired ? In what manner do they get over the difficulty of having made his Majesty avow a sentiment, which they now come forward to contradict by a legislative proceeding ? If we are to appeal merely to the grounds of general notoriety and observation, I will affirm that, so far from increasing, the danger has diminished. But I call upon a learned gentleman, high in the profession of the law. He stated, upon a former occasion, that his table was covered with libels, and that he knew not

which he was to select for prosecution. Will he now state that he has much such occupation? Citizen Lee, indeed, and one or two other miserable publishers, were the other day taken up. But does there, in the present moment, exist any serious alarm from the extensive circulation, or dangerous tendency of the libellous publications of those societies, who were formerly so much reproached with their mischievous activity? But there is another thing to which we ought to attend—the professions of the persons who form those societies. If formerly they preached up, that the house of commons ought not to be looked to in any representative capacity—if they disavowed the constitution—if they even menaced the throne, it was evident that they now held very different doctrines. They now came forward to petition the house of commons, to acknowledge the constitution, and to approach the throne with respect. If even in these professions they were not sincere—if they assumed them only as a hypocritical mask to cover their real views, still it proved, that they were now so far curbed and suppressed, that even if they had circulated their doctrines in the country, in order to make converts, such was their experience of the character of the country, and such their sense of the reprobation which had everywhere attended their efforts, that they had now been compelled to abandon their object. The hon. gentleman accuses us with a degree of jesuitical conduct, in avoiding to state the dangers to be apprehended from those societies; and calls upon us to point out a remedy adequate to the evil. I have no hesitation to state to him what are my views upon that subject. That there are among some of the members of those societies dispositions hostile to the established constitution, I will not deny; a few desperate and abandoned individuals will always exist under every community. That there have likewise been some who have shown their attachment to French principles, or rather, have gratified their own absurd vanity, by an adoption of French phrases, I am equally prepared to admit. They might conceive that such phrases would, in all probability, become the fashion; and tend to give currency to their principles. But what has been the consequence? That these infatuated men have shown themselves as ignorant of the genius of the English character, and of their rooted attachment to the constitution, as ministers themselves, when they apprehended any danger from those pro-

ceedings. A violent alarm was now affected with respect to opinions which did not exactly tally with the particular forms under which the constitution was now carried on. Such has not always been the case. I beg leave to remind the right hon. gentleman, that he once entertained an opinion, that if a reform in parliament was not adopted, though the form of the constitution might remain its virtue and its energy would be lost. A noble duke carried the same sentiment farther, and contended, that universal suffrage, and annual parliaments, could alone restore the constitution to its pristine vigour and excellence. The noble duke, I understand, has since, at a public meeting, retracted that opinion ; he candidly avowed, that, at one time, such were his sentiments ; but that mature reflection on the state of the country, and attention to the events which had passed in a neighbouring kingdom, had induced him to form a different view of the subject. Such an avowal on the part of the noble duke was fair and manly. But were his Majesty's ministers alone to monopolize the right to a change of sentiment ? Would they not allow others who might have found their projects to be wild and chimerical, to be equally sincere in their professions of conversion ? It has been said, that these societies were influenced by the example of France. May it not be presumed, that they will be reformed by its misfortunes ? It is not reasonable to suppose, that after the experience they have had of the calamities which certain principles have produced in France ;—after the reprobation which they have found to attend any attempt to introduce them here, and the impossibility of bringing them into practice under any shape, these societies may, for the present, have given up their views ? I am now convinced that the danger is much less than was to be apprehended at any former period ; and that nothing but the danger which may arise from the prosecution of despotic measures—such as the bill now submitted to your consideration—can tend to revive such principles in this country. The hon. gentleman admits the value of what is taken away, but argues the necessity of giving up some part, in order to preserve the remainder. Upon the face of the business, I contend, that there is no proof of any danger having existed. And I insist upon this the more strenuously, because no proof has been attempted to be brought forward. Formerly, when the right hon. gentleman thought that he was in possession

of proof of which he could avail himself, he moved for a secret committee; had he now been in possession of the same materials, he would no doubt have had recourse to the same measure. The right hon. gentleman asks in what situation societies will be, when this bill has passed? It will only be necessary that the meetings should be publicly advertised. The right hon. gentleman says, that the evil of these meetings was, that they were secret and clandestine. How far is this consistent with the charge brought against them, that their mischievous tendency chiefly resulted from the impression which their proceedings made upon the public mind, and the multitude whom they brought together? So little regard had they to concealment, that all the papers which formed the materials of the report of the secret committee, had been repeatedly advertised in every public journal. Mr. Sheridan here entered into a particular examination of the clauses of the bill. The first enacted, that no meeting exceeding fifty persons should be held, excepting notice was given by seven householders of the intention to summon such meeting. Thus all journeymen, and others, who were not householders, were debarred from the privilege of holding a meeting, and of complaining of any grievance which might particularly attach to their situation, from the oppression of masters or the high price of rent. At a time when it was reckoned equally a question of humanity and expediency, not to mark too strongly the distinction between the different classes of the community, was it either humane or advisable to deprive so large a body of men of the right of petitioning—to exclude them from the privilege of discussing their complaints, and the means of demanding redress? After this bill had passed, they would no longer have an opportunity of meeting to discuss their particular grievances, or be able to exercise their right of petition.

He next adverted to the mode in which notice was required to be given of the meeting, which was so clogged with embarrassments that no editor of a newspaper would choose to take upon himself the responsibility of publishing the advertisement. As to the notice to be given to the clerk of the peace, it depended upon so many circumstances that it was doubtful whether, in any instance, it could take effect. The clerk of the peace might be absent: he was required to communicate the notice to three justices, who might not be in the way to receive it within due time. It

was a mockery to pretend to give people the privilege of holding a meeting and to affix to that privilege such conditions as did not at all depend on their own will and choice. Why had not the old modes of giving notice, by means of the common cryer, or by an intimation at the church door, been adopted? Newspapers, in comparison, were but modern vehicles of such notices. This remark became more important, from the consideration of what was the present state of the press. Most of the country papers were either under the influence of the administration, or at least strongly infected with party prejudices. Some of those who conducted them held situations under government; and could it be expected, that under these circumstances, sheltered too by the pretence of a responsibility which they might not choose to incur, they would publish the notice of a meeting for any purpose which they had reason to suppose would be disagreeable to those who were in power? He contended that all those restrictions amounted, in fact, to a total prohibition; and that it would have been more manly to have put an end to all public meetings at once. But allowing the meeting to be held, it depends on the discretion of a justice to dissolve it immediately, if he thinks the matter which is proposed improper to be discussed. It may be said that he is not left to an arbitrary discretion, but that he is bound by precise and fixed rules. But how does this reasoning apply? If the question for the consideration of the meeting should be the dismissal of ministers, the restoration of peace, a reform in parliament, or the regulation of the public expenditure, may he not contend that these are topics very unfit to be argued under the circumstances of the times, and which might tend to excite hatred or contempt against the established government? But it was said the justice was responsible for the exercise of his authority. Might he not be of the same opinion as the right hon. gentleman, that the discussion of certain topics at a particular time was unwise and unseasonable? For instance, if the matter propounded was what had been stated in petitions recorded on the journals of the house, that we are not the representatives of the people; that a great number are sent to this house by peers, and that seats are openly bought like stalls for cattle at a fair; might not the justice conscientiously consider this representation as calculated to excite hatred or contempt against the established constitution? But the hon. gentleman stated that

the justice came to the meeting merely to watch the proceedings ; that he was to wait till he heard the name of the person who had expressed himself seditiously ; and then what harm was there if he should arrest the person ? Gentlemen seemed to think that they had gained a great point, by having inserted in the bill the words “ wilfully and advisedly.” They did not recollect that this might afterwards be a fit question for the consideration of a jury ; it was precisely the circumstance of which the magistrate could not judge on the spur of the moment. Was it nothing new that every debate of Englishmen should be watched and controlled by a magistrate ? In the riot act, the expressions which gave to the magistrate his authority were “ authorised, empowered and required.” In the present bill ministers dared not insert the word “ required.” They were well aware that no person of independent character, or proper feelings, would choose to put himself in the situation of relating the proceeding of a public meeting ; and in what a situation must the person be who is obliged, in the course of speaking, to examine the countenance of a magistrate, to observe his nods and looks, in order to discover to what a degree he meets his approbation, or how far he may proceed with safety to himself ? Another question was, what was to be done with the man after he was seized ? Mr. Sheridan referred to the riot act, the principles of which had, in his opinion, been mistaken when it was adverted to, or quoted as applicable to the present case. According to the riot act, the person who was guilty of a treasonable tumult was found not only in the meditation, but in the very commission of the criminal act. It was necessary to arrest his hands, and to prevent him from the power of doing farther mischief. But was there that exigency, that pressure in the present case, which required a similar principle to be adopted ? By this bill the magistrates were empowered to seize men whose sentiments they should disapprove ; and if they resisted, to command that they should separate, under the penalty of military execution. But Mr. Sheridan put the case, that they might refuse to separate, not tumultuously and riotously, but quietly and peaceably. On what pretext would the magistrate then be able to enforce the law ? He need not observe that the riot act was brought in during the time of a rebellion, when danger was apprehended, not from loose societies, but from a considerable body of gentlemen, whose numbers were supposed to amount to one-third, if not

a larger proportion, of the country, disaffected to the existing government, and disposed to bring in a family whose existence on the throne had been found to be incompatible with the rights and liberties of Englishmen. Under these circumstances, it was impossible to view the provisions of the riot act, and not to admire the merciful temper which then prevailed, in comparison with the bloody spirit which had dictated the clauses of the present bill.

Mr. Sheridan remarked that much had been said about resistance. He was obliged to gentlemen for giving him an opportunity of offering his opinion on that subject. If the bill should pass into a law, and there should be a body ready to resist, in what mode would he recommend to them to oppose that resistance? He would recommend it to them to oppose in the way not of an active, but a passive resistance. To meet above the number of fifty, to send for a magistrate, and if they were ordered to disperse, to say not a word, but to remain together above an hour. If men had no lawful means of meeting; if they resorted to this mode of asserting their rights; if they kept their seats, would you say that magistrates were entitled to enforce military execution, in order to disperse them, or send them to prison? If they said, "we are slaves, we will submit to any fate rather than remain in this abject state of subjection;" he put it to the hearts and consciences of the house whether a jury would be able to find such men guilty? To have recourse to such laws was the characteristic of a feeble and cruel policy, equally impotent as detestable. It is thus, said Mr. Sheridan, that you blaspheme and violate your statute books with oppressive and sanguinary laws, which afterwards you dare not execute. If this bill passes into a law, gentlemen will be very slow in taking upon themselves the office of magistrate. I objected to the magistrates of Westminster, as the hired and temporary agents of ministers. You will then find none but such to perform the functions of the magistracy; none but those who are disposed to rank as the mere servants of the crown, and who think that the people have no rights, excepting what they derive from the throne; who are entirely prepared to become the dependants of ministers, and to act as the tools and agents of their policy. Now for the alternative; supposing that this bill does not pass into a law. It is then stated that all these societies will go on to imitate the example of France, and to introduce a similar order of things into this country. The

hon. gentleman, however, admits that there is some difference of character between the inhabitants of the two countries; and what do gentlemen suppose to constitute the distinguishing excellence of a government? Not any advantage resulting from theory; not any particular form of administration; but its tendency to produce souls and hearts of a more noble, generous, and benevolent texture, than those which are called forth under the influence of a different government. Gentlemen seemed to be afraid that we should undertake the task of vindicating the French revolution. Do they not recollect that, in its outset, it was distinguished by sentiments of the most refined philanthropy, and the most exalted benevolence? that declarations of universal fraternity, and wishes for eternal union, were so often repeated as to approach to a species of cant? But it is said, that all the subsequent horrors and bloodshed proceeded from the influence of a club. Yes, said Mr. Sheridan, they proceeded from the influence of a club, but it was the club of Pilnitz. That associated combination of despots were the first promoters of all those dreadful scenes which have since been acted on the stage of France. There is nothing so cowardly or so cruel as panic. When the French found that powerful combination formed to crush their rising revolution, panic and terror took the place of reason and moderation. To the mild maxims and equitable principles of the early supporters of the revolution, succeeded a system of tyranny and oppression. Nothing is so mild and gentle as courage. On the contrary, panic rules by panic; terror governs by terror; hence we may account for the atrocities of the successive tyrants of France, who, knowing that their throne was founded in fear, were sensible that it could only be cemented by blood. Mr. Sheridan said, that from this example he gathered two lessons: First, that the miseries and the sufferings of France had not proceeded from any circulation of opinions, but from the influence of a system of terror: Secondly, that we ought not, from observation of the conduct of Frenchmen, to judge of the English mind and the English character. As to what our situation would be when the bill was passed, it would be a state of the most abject slavery. My right hon. friend (Mr. Fox) truly and eloquently stated that the prosperity of the country depended on the energy and freedom of the people; as our constitution is supposed not to be supported by numbers, but by all. Every exertion of ex-

tensive private benevolence, of great public utility, has been effected not by solitary efforts, but by great meetings. Those great meetings were a source of the virtues of the people, and a security for the preservation of the national character, and it was essential that they should be maintained in their freedom and purity. An idea had been attempted to be inculcated that the bill had come out of the committee materially amended. No such thing was the case. A few trifling alterations only had taken place. Mr. Sheridan said, that he considered himself justified in abstaining from all interference with the bill, and proposing no alterations, because he considered the whole as a tissue of absurdity and folly, of cruelty and blood; it was all deformity to the eye, and corruption to the touch. With respect to the connection between the outrage upon his Majesty and the king-killing pamphlet, he did not deny that such a connection existed, but, he affirmed, it had not been made out by any sort of proof. He felt himself called upon to be particularly cautious, when he recollected that the spies of ministers had been the authors, instigators, publishers, and circulators, of the most gross and inflammatory compositions, in order to fix the imputation of guilt upon others. Mr. Sheridan said that he thought, in the whole conduct of ministers, he perceived a design to represent the feelings of irritation and indignation in the public mind, as not resulting from their own pernicious measures, or the misfortunes in which they had plunged the country, but as directed against a person who, by the principles of the constitution, cannot err. They wished to point at that quarter, in order to screen themselves from those feelings of indignation which they were sensible they had so justly merited. In this design they were favoured by the nature of the war in which we were engaged. Other wars had been undertaken for objects connected more with the character, the commerce, and territory of the country: this was strictly a war of kings; and under this idea the minds of rash and ignorant men, smarting under their sufferings, might be led to mistake the proper objects of their resentment, and to indulge a momentary irritation against the sovereign. This mistake might the more readily be cherished, as the only pretence for which the war had been so long carried on, was from an opinion that seemed to prevail in the cabinet, that a great nation could not have a trustworthy government, under which it could enjoy prosperity, or maintain

connections with other powers, unless it had a monarch at its head. Ministers might congratulate themselves upon the successes of their artifices; the outrage upon the sovereign, if it was not merely accidental, was to them a pledge of their security. They had interposed the throne as a shield between themselves and the effect of popular fury; they employed the sceptre as a conductor, in order to draw off from their own heads the lightning of the resentment of an injured nation. Mr. Sheridan then adverted to what Mr. Hardinge had stated respecting the license of the theatres, the history of which he explained. He complimented Lord Chesterfield's speech against the bill for licensing the stage, which he thought by far the best production his lordship ever wrote or delivered. He should not, however, have noticed this trivial incident in Mr. Hardinge's argument, had it not been for the personal application it had to him. The principle of that regulation was moral and not political; in the latter view he could not conceive who was to be answerable, the author, actor, or manager. Was Mr. Bensley to be accountable for the sentiments put into the mouth of *Pierre*, in *Venice Preserved*? No man, indeed, could say that he did not speak them deliberately. The origin of the restriction was in order to repress indecencies and abuses—such as a man must want common decorum to introduce. As a proof that the power of the licenser was sometimes abused, Mr. Sheridan alluded to an anecdote respecting himself: on the night before the first appearance of the *School for Scandal*, he was informed that it could not be performed, as a license was refused. It happened at this time there was the famous city contest for the office of chamberlain, between Wilkes and Hopkins. The latter had been charged with some practices similar to those of *Moses*, the Jew, in lending money to young men under age; and it was supposed that the character of the play was levelled at him, in order to injure him in his contest, in which he was supported by the ministerial interest. In the warmth of a contested election, the piece was represented as a factious and seditious opposition to a court candidate. He, however, went to Lord Hertford, then lord chamberlain, who laughed at the affair, and gave the license. For his own part, he deemed a theatre no fit place for politics, nor would he think much of the principles or taste of the man who should wish to introduce them into stage representation. With respect to the London

stage, the fact however was, that the players were considered as the king's servants, and the theatre the king's theatre ; and there was nothing so natural as that no pieces should be permitted that were not agreeable to his Majesty. Covent Garden and Drury Lane were the only licensed theatres in the kingdom ; none others were subject to license at all ; so that point of the hon. gentleman's argument fell to the ground. Mr. Sheridan concluded with solemnly and seriously declaring, that if the bill passed into a law, he believed, that it would either be the final doom of liberty in this country, or that it must lead to those dreadful scenes of distraction and commotion which every man must deprecate, and which he would almost rather die than be compelled to witness.

A division took place upon the question for the third reading of the bill—ayes 266 ; noes 51.

DECEMBER 4.

ARMY EXTRAORDINARIES.

The report of the resolutions of the committee of supply on the extraordinaries of the army was brought up and read a first time ; and on the second reading, Mr. Whitbread moved an amendment, " That the sum charged for building of barracks should be left out of the resolution."

MR. SHERIDAN rose to second the amendment of his hon. friend. He considered it as a part of the system of ministers to erect military fortresses all over the kingdom, in order to establish a military government ; and therefore this article, of all others, had no pretence to a place among the extraordinaries of the army. The extraordinaries of the army were supposed to consist of nothing but such expenses as could not be foreseen. The erection of barracks did not come under that description, and was an expense which must have been foreseen. He was convinced, that if their plan had been stated at the begining, to its utmost extent, it would have found but a feeble support in the house ; and therefore he was desirous, that even now it should be developed and submitted to them as a subject of open and separate discussion. Besides being unconstitutional in its object, it was become a mere government job ; for he had heard of barrack-masters being appointed, with large salaries, where there were no barracks, and no intention of erecting them. With respect to the West India expedition, he wished for nothing so much as a fair inquiry into the subject. He hoped that it was

the intention of administration to institute an inquiry into the whole conduct of the war, and then he would have an opportunity of showing the inhuman neglect of this expedition, in which there was not only an extravagant waste of treasure and national honour, but also of the lives of their countrymen.

The house divided—for the amendment 28; against it 74.

Mr. Sheridan asked whether the sum, which they were now called upon to vote, would cover the whole expense of the barracks? From his own observation, and from the report of others, he understood that a great part of the barracks were by no means completed; they were at present in a state of preparation, and it might cost the country as much more before they were finished. Now he wished to put to the house, suppose that the sum total of these barracks should amount to two millions (and it was not probable that it would fall short of one million), if the estimate had in the first instance been laid before the house, would they have consented to incur so enormous an expense for such an object? Now, however, they were called upon to vote it away in scraps and parcels, without any account being given of the application, or having any means to judge how far they were applying the money of their constituents for a proper purpose.

DECEMBER 7.

LOAN.

The loan was raised for 1796 without the usual mode of competition. Mr. Pitt assigned as a reason for this conduct, that the persons concerned in procuring the last loan had not yet received the latter instalments due to them upon it. He had, however, so far consulted the good of the public, that the interest to them would not prove more than £4 4s. 3d. per cent. This assertion gave birth to a long and tedious discussion.

MR. SHERIDAN said he rose to make one observation; the right hon. gentleman admitted that he had been in an error with respect to what passed with Mr. Boyd; that when he came to carry his project of competition into execution, he had, for the first time, discovered that he was entangled in an engagement, of which he was not before aware; and that, had it not been for this, he would have proceeded to a loan by competition. He thought it extraordinary that, in transacting this loan, he should have forgotten the circumstances that passed in conversa

tion with Mr. Boyd. He said that, in a former conversation with Mr. Morgan, the right hon. gentleman was chargeable with the same forgetfulness as to the circumstances of the Austrian loan; that Mr. Morgan and his friends had taken fire at this, and had posted up a paper in the Stock Exchange. He thought it somewhat extraordinary, that after the rebuke which the right hon. gentleman had received, he should omit being explicit, whether or not there was to be another Austrian loan? He asserted, that the effect of this negligence would be a total loss of character as to punctuality of business, a great pecuniary loss to Mr. Morgan and his friends, and a loss to the public of nearly £400,000 sterling. How far such a loss was criminal, he should leave to the committee. The question he wished to ask was, whether the right hon. gentleman considered himself bound to contract no new loan till the last payment on the former one was made good?

DECEMBER 8.

WAYS AND MEANS.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that though it would be more proper to come in detail to the taxes, he wished merely to observe at large on one or two points. When the bills should be brought in on the several taxes, there would be ample scope for particular observation and discussion. With regard to the tax on horses, he thought it should not extend to the agricultural part of the country. When a tax was before laid on the carts, to which his hon. friend (Mr. Curwen) alluded, the law was repealed, because the house thought that part of the community ought to be held sacred. Besides, the tax on husbandry then was not so heavy as now; and the farmer was then more able to bear taxation. He thought the right hon. gentleman also wrong in his calculation of this tax; he doubted the amount produced by the tax on horses of pleasure, without allowing any diminution in consequence of the duty; for certainly gentlemen would be induced to keep fewer horses on account of the tax. The plea of laying a duty on the farmer's horses, namely, the dearness of provisions, was a bad one; for if the farmer already, from a principle of rapacity, stood out for an extravagant price for his provisions, would the house, he asked, increase that rapacity? Would they furnish him an excuse for asking more? Again, the horse-dealer

was thrown into a disagreeable predicament by doubling his license. The imposing a duty of £20 on him, injured him in the exercise of his business. Again, how would the tax be extended to all horses? Did the right hon. gentleman mean to employ officers to ascertain the number of horses, and the age when the duty was to attach? How could he ascertain all the horses in New Forest and elsewhere? In fact, if the right hon. gentleman followed up his own principle, he would find that the operation of the tax would defeat its own purpose; for in New Forest, and such places, there were horses that were not employed for any service. On the other hand, if he confined the tax to horses of pleasure, he would find that it would be unproductive. Upon the whole, then, he wished him to reconsider it, and substitute some more equitable and productive tax. The next thing to which he wished to call the attention of the house, was the tax on collateral successions. He was free to say, that this had so many difficulties as to render it, to all intents and purposes, impracticable. There would appear so many difficulties in preparing the provisions, and enforcing the regulations of the bills on this head, that, on the first blush of it, he thought it ought to be abandoned. With regard to personal property, did the right hon. gentleman mean to ascertain the real value of estates, to find the amount of debts? Could an officer be able to ascertain all this, and afterwards, on a division, strike a balance? He would put a case: how could the commercial stock in trade of a merchant be ascertained, and his debts, with a thousand other complicated circumstances, be regulated? With regard to real property, how could it be made to attach to life estate? In the cases of mortgage, it would be difficult to ascertain the real value above incumbrance. He thought Mr. Pitt was beyond the mark, in stating the property of the nation in this way at twenty-eight years purchase. In this estimate the right hon. gentleman could not be regular. Was he to institute assessors to ascertain the amount of personal property? and on the whole, would he constitute an inquisitorial power? He said thus much, merely to induce the right hon. gentleman to consider the business maturely; and if he did so, he thought he would find his plan impracticable.

DECEMBER 9.

MESSAGE FROM THE KING RELATIVE TO A NEGOTIATION WITH
FRANCE.

On the 8th December the following message was delivered from his Majesty:—

“ George R.

“ His Majesty, relying on the assurances which he has received from his faithful commons, of their determination to support his Majesty in those exertions which are necessary, under the present circumstances, recommends it to this house to consider of making provision towards enabling his Majesty to defray any extraordinary expense which may be incurred for the service of the ensuing year, and to take such measures as the exigency of affairs may require. His Majesty, on this occasion, thinks proper to acquaint the house, that the crisis which was depending at the commencement of the present session, has led to such an order of things in France as will induce his Majesty (conformably to the sentiments which he has already declared), to meet any disposition to negotiate on the part of the enemy, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, and to conclude a treaty of general peace, whenever it can be effected on just and suitable terms for himself and his allies. It is his Majesty’s earnest wish that the spirit and determination manifested by parliament, added to the recent and important successes of the Austrian armies, and to the continued and growing embarrassments of the enemy, may speedily conduce to the attainment of this object, on such grounds as the justice of the cause in which this country is engaged, and the situation of affairs, may entitle his Majesty to expect.

“ G. R.”

On the 9th the message was taken into consideration, and the usual address moved by Mr. Pitt.

MR. SHERIDAN said, I certainly rise with considerable astonishment at the conciseness with which the right hon. gentleman has thought proper to preface the address which he has now proposed to the house. As there does not appear a disposition in the house to notice either that conciseness, or the matter contained in the address, it is impossible for me to remain silent. The right hon. gentleman said, that he would trouble the house only with a few words, because that order of things which had been intimated in the speech of his Majesty, affording a reasonable expectation of security and permanence in any treaty which might be formed, had arrived. Undoubtedly, we were told in his Majesty’s speech, that such an order of things was expected. I should have hoped that the right hon. gentleman would not have come forward to say that peace was at all nearer, but only that the obstacle arising from the nature of the government in France was removed. But I ask why the right hon. gentleman

comes now to tell us, for the first time, that the government of France is of a description with which we may safely negotiate, and is capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity? Time and experience have, no doubt, enabled him to alter his former opinions on that subject. All the advantages which he can have derived from time and experience, have occurred within the last five weeks. This is the utmost space which he can possibly assign for the acquirement of those new means of information, which have produced so material an alteration in his sentiments. But in fact, I contend, that he has had only one week, and that upon the experience of that single week, he now comes forward, not to propose a jealous peace or an armed truce, but a peace affording a reasonable prospect of security and permanence. If he contends that he had more time to make up his mind on the subject, I ask him, why he did not bring forward the result of his deliberation before he settled the terms of the loan? This one week's experience of the right hon. gentleman has cost the country two millions of money! What excuse—what apology—can he possibly allege to the nation in justification of his conduct? Will he say that on Wednesday last, when he arranged the terms of the loan, he had not taken such a view of the subject—he did not possess such means of information—he had not such grounds of decision as he has since acquired? The effect of the message last night has been, that the loan is this day at a premium of two per cent., and a sum of £2,200,000 is lost to this country: but I must confess, when I see the right hon. gentleman turning so short—when I see him altering his opinions and reversing his former declarations, I think that he is not sincere in the object which he avows. If I conceived him sincere, so desirable is the conclusion of a peace to every friend of his country, however much I might think his policy deserving of censure, I should avoid every species of reproach on the present occasion; but when I see the right hon. gentleman bringing forward such a declaration, at the present moment, in order to defeat the proposition (Mr. Grey's motion for peace) of my hon. friend, I cannot help adverting to the grounds on which he may be supposed to have changed his opinion—I must look how that government is composed which he now states to be capable of negotiation. I have only to refer to his own statement on a recent occasion (the opening of the

budget). This very government he then stated to be not only on the verge, but in the very gulf of bankruptcy. And having stated that it was on the verge of what must inevitably throw it down and bring it to destruction, he now submits a proposition to the house, that it is not only a form of government with which we may safely negotiate, but capable of maintaining peace on a footing of permanence and security ! But will he say, that he is more reconciled to the men who exercise the functions of that government ? Some time since it was said, that men of milder character had obtained the administration, and that a more moderate system of policy would be adopted. Of the five who compose the executive directory, four voted for the death of the king ; the fifth happened to be absent at that period. These were the very men whose pernicious councils were said to have brought on the war with this country, and with respect to whom it had been affirmed, that no settled order of things could take place in France till they had fallen under the sword of justice. Had the right hon. gentleman then changed his opinion merely because the forms of the government were altered ? because the old men met in one place and the younger in another ? Was it on the ground of such trifling distinctions he now came forward to contradict every opinion, to retract every profession which he had formerly uttered, and to pledge himself to a new declaration of sentiment, without any facts, or appearance of facts, by which it was supported ? There is something so contradictory in all this, that I think it impossible the right hon. gentleman can be sincere.—When I find him one day saying, that the French government is in the gulf of bankruptcy, and on another, that it is capable of maintaining a permanent peace, I cannot help thinking that he has still some subterfuge in store, and that he yet hopes to find a pretext to justify him in continuing the contest, for the purpose of restoring the old despotism of France. If we were not to look to the subject seriously, we might, perhaps, find some other reason for this change of sentiment on the part of the right hon. gentleman. If it be said that the French government has now revoked its declaration of interfering with the governments of other countries, and on that account is better qualified for negotiation, that declaration, I must remark, has long been revoked. The charge of a wanton interference with other governments, applied to the French, I contend, never to have been just. The

declaration which they made on that subject, was in consequence of the coalition of kings. When the confederated princes expressed their determination not to permit them to effect their revolution, and establish a government for themselves, they thought themselves justified in retaliating, by declaring their enmity to all kingly governments, and their readiness to assist in their destruction. But in whatever light this declaration be considered, whether as a retort or retaliation, in no point of view am I prepared to justify it—it has long since been disclaimed. What then is the period at which the right hon. gentleman thinks proper to declare, that the French government is capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity? At the moment when the members seek to establish their power by the system of forced elections, when they avow the principle of not being responsible to their constituents, when they seek to establish their authority in the capital by force of arms, and have the place of their deliberations surrounded by large bodies of the military in order to overawe the people: at such a moment, when the members of the French government adopt the system of self-election, of taking all power into their own hands, and of treating with contempt the rights, the opinions, and the interests of the people, the gentlemen on the other side exclaim:—"This is something like a regular government! This is a form of administration with which we may treat with safety; we have now got something resembling the worst parts of the British constitution;" and it is to be remarked, that the way in which those gentlemen choose to express their attachment to the constitution, is by the eagerness which they show to retain its abuses. There is one word in the address which must have prevented it from obtaining an unanimous occurrence—the expression which relates to the justice of the war. We never can subscribe to the justice of the principle upon which the war was commenced. But this is not the only objection to the address in its present form; it expresses a principle which must ever remove to a distance any hope of secure and permanent peace, till the whole country shall join to disclaim and reprobate the system derived from such a source. It seems that the present state of things in France is such as ministers think may safely admit of negotiation. This principle has often been before intimated, but has never been before so openly avowed. It now seems that we must carry on a

war till a form of government takes place agreeable to the fancy and caprice of his Majesty's ministers. If it should happen that the government is not so shaped and framed, as exactly to coincide with their ideas, we must be immediately plunged into all the horrors of war. If the present form of government, which happens to tally with the notions of ministers, should be changed during the progress of negotiation—if this government, of which they have had only the experience of five weeks, should be thought to require some alteration after peace is concluded, and the house sanctions the principle which is now avowed, ministers may think themselves justified in entering into new hostilities, and involving the country in a new war. As long as that principle continues to be avowed and to be acted upon, we may have a hollow and an armed truce, but we never can have anything like a secure and permanent peace. The hon. gentleman has been so very concise as not to afford me an opportunity of saying so much as I might otherwise have been called upon to bring forward. I must conclude with most decidedly reprobating the principle, that any objections on the part of ministers to a particular form of government shall be, in any instance, deemed a just cause for commencing and continuing hostilities. On that ground I take the liberty of suggesting the following amendment:—

“Your Majesty's faithful commons, having thus manifested their determination to give your Majesty the most vigorous support in the further prosecution of the war, in case just and reasonable terms of peace should be refused on the part of the enemy; and having declared the cordial satisfaction they feel at your Majesty's gracious intention to meet any disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy, with an earnest desire to give it the fullest and speediest effect, cannot at the same time avoid expressing the deep regret they feel, that your Majesty should ever have been advised to consider the internal order of things in France, to have been such as should not have induced your Majesty at any time to meet a disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy.

“And your faithful commons feel themselves at this conjuncture the more forcibly called on to declare this opinion, because, if the present existing order of things in France be admitted as the motive and inducement to negotiation, a change

in that order of things may be considered as a ground for discontinuing negotiation begun, or even for abandoning a treaty concluded.

“Wherefore, your Majesty’s faithful commons, duly reflecting on the calamitous waste of treasure and blood, to which it is now manifest the acting on this principle has so unfortunately and so largely contributed; and greatly apprehensive of the grievous and ruinous consequences to which the persevering to act on such a principle must inevitably tend, do humbly and earnestly implore your Majesty, that it may be altogether abandoned and disclaimed, and that the form of government or internal order of things in France, whatever they may be, or shall become, may be no bar to a negotiation for restoring to your Majesty’s subjects the blessings of peace, whenever it can be effected on just and suitable terms for your Majesty and your allies.

“And as the principal bar to a negotiation for peace appears to have been your Majesty’s having been hitherto advised to consider the order of things in France, as precluding your Majesty from meeting a disposition to negotiation on the part of the enemy, your faithful commons now humbly beseech your Majesty to give distinct directions that an immediate negotiation be entered on for the above salutary object.”

At the close of the debate—

Mr. Sheridan explained part of his speech which had been misrepresented by the chancellor of the exchequer. The object of his amendment was to prevent ministers, of whose sincerity he had many doubts, from making any possible change in the internal situation of France an excuse for breaking off a negotiation. In answer to the invidious reflection of Mr. Pitt, addressed to his hon. friend (Mr. Grey), “That the son had appeared to forget the services of his father” (Sir C. Grey), he remarked that ministers had completely forgotten them, as that meritorious officer was literally the only one entrusted with an important command, who had received no mark of favour from his Majesty’s government.

Mr. Sheridan’s amendment was negatived without a division. The original address was then carried.

DECEMBER 10.

TREASON AND SEDITION BILLS.

The order of the day for the third reading was read. Mr. Western said the bill would deprive the people of mutual confidence and general freedom, whilst it would render the crime of high treason vague and indefinite, and the person of his Majesty unsafe. He would use a stronger argument in support of this observation than any of his own, by reading an extract from an author of great weight, which as forcibly applied to the present time as if it had been written for it. The extract was from Swift's "Political Creed."

Mr. I. H. Browne thought the authority of Swift in politics, was one that the house would not be inclined to allow, as that author was distinguished as a factious and illiberal writer on politics.

MR. SHERIDAN rose, and animadverted very warmly on the reflections thrown out by an honourable gentleman (Mr. I. H. Browne) on Dean Swift, and said that gentleman had confined his whole argument to reviling the character and memory of that great man. The house, he was sure, would feel an hereditary respect for that illustrious divine and philosopher. But it was not merely from that motive, but from respect to truth, he now took up that point; for surely, every one would agree with him, that there never was a man who, with a more firm and manly spirit of attachment to the rights of mankind, maintained the cause of freedom, or in a greater degree merited the tribute of gratitude; and he declared he never heard a passage more applicable to the present times than that quoted by his honourable friend (Mr. Western). That the dean was no flatterer of great men, that he had sown the seeds of reform in the state, and that the whole body of court corruption had been the object of his attack, was much to his honour. He was not surprised that those who considered improvident loans and corrupt courts were useful to the constitution should revile the memory of Swift with abhorrence. He recollected some lines of a poem, called the "Libel on the Rev. Dr. Delaney, and his excellency Lord John Carteret," where Dean Swift supposes in Ireland (for no such thing could happen here), that a minister comes with a budget full of rewards for those who support him, which, though of course, not applicable now, might show what the corruption of loans and budgets were in Dean Swift's time.

He says, after supposing a gentleman who pays his court to a minister must perform actions contrary to his disposition, like

the avenging angel in Mr. Addison's admired simile, where he repeats,—

“ I'll lend you an allusion fitter,
 Though flatt'ring knaves may call it bitter;
 Which, if you durst but give it place,
 Would show you many a statesman's face.”

* * * * *

“ So to effect his monarch's ends,
 From hell a viceroy devil ascends;
 His budget with corruptions cramm'd,
 The contributions of the damn'd;
 Which, with unsparing hand, he throws
 Through courts and senates as he goes;
 And then at Beelzebub's black hall,
 Complains his budget was too small.”

That a man who had so expressed his abhorrence of corruption should be detested by the abettors of that corruption, was, he repeated, not at all astonishing.

Mr. Sheridan suspected there had been a similar strewing of favours here, and the hon. gentleman opposite had come in for his share, though he certainly would not presume to say,

“ From budgets with corruptions cramm'd,
 The contributions of the damn'd.”

He did not wish to enter much into the subject of the bill then before the house, because it did not warrant much comment. The attempt upon his Majesty was simply the pretext and stalking-horse for the introduction of it, as there were certainly provisions enow for the protection of his person before; and excepting the clause which constitutes the overawing of parliament treason, there was no new treason. If this law had been enacted some time ago, he observed, the leading part of administration would have been transported; and, indeed, he was sorry for the country's sake that it had not. To state this more clearly, would any one deny this proposition, that when Mr. Pitt, in conjunction with the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Horne Tooke, signed the resolutions at the Thatched House for a plan of parliamentary reform, wherein he represented the house of commons to be corrupt, and not the real representatives of the people, that such a proceeding might have a tendency to stir up the people to the hatred and contempt of the government? He would ask the hon. gentleman whether the principles of Mr. Reeves's book were

not calculated to stir up hatred and contempt against the constitution, and whether the punishment pronounced in this bill would be too severe upon him? But any attempt to unmask the corruptions of government and defects of our constitution, was the evil which ministers wished to guard against; and the real object of the bill went to say, the question of a reform in parliament and existing abuses must no longer be discussed. As to any gentleman's suggesting to advise his Majesty to give a negative to the bill, from an apprehension that the passing of it would excite the resistance of the country, and lead to actual convulsion, and excite a doubt whether he might not thereby violate the conditions of his swaying the British sceptre, for his own part, he considered this would be a laudable interference on the part of some great hereditary councillor, and would entitle him to immortal honour. Were his Majesty but to say in the house of lords, "I will consider," (*Le Roi advisera*) he might dismiss his guards, and return with the gratitude of thousands of his subjects. Mr. Sheridan said he wished to move an amendment to the clause (p. 3) which says, "If any person within that part of Great Britain called England shall, &c." by leaving out the words, "that part of Great Britain called England;" when the right hon. secretary stated that he never stood so high with his countrymen (and he wished him an opportunity of standing still higher), and they were loyal, and not tainted with the same seditious spirit as in England; and also, not one hundredth part of the danger existed now which did in 1792; he would ask whether parliament ought not to extend the merciful operation of this law to his countrymen in the north, and whether he could oppose any such amendment? In the Scotch courts the sentence for sedition was unlimited (fourteen years had been pronounced); this bill made it seven years for the second offence.

Mr. Sheridan proposed a clause, applying the enactment of the present bill to Scotland, in order to remove from the judges that arbitrary and discretionary power which they had formerly exercised.

The house divided—for the clause 27; against it 184. The bill was read a third time and passed.

DECEMBER 11.

REPORT OF THE HIGH PRICE OF CORN.

The report of the select committee appointed to take into consideration the present high price of corn was brought up, and a motion made, "That the house do agree to the resolution proposed by the committee respecting an association of the members of the house, to diminish the consumption of the bread made of wheat flour," &c.

MR. SHERIDAN said there was one point which would give him much satisfaction to hear, viz., that the proposed substitutes for the bread now in use would prove equally nutritive; but he was afraid that was not the case. He had been informed that in many cases, in which they had attempted to make bread of different mixtures, it had been found not only unpalatable, but unwholesome. This appeared to him a most material object, because, from the very high price of all the other articles of life, many of the labouring poor were forced to live chiefly on bread. The only remedy he saw for it was to adopt the bill which had been brought in to increase the wages of labourers. Persons who were in a more affluent situation would be enabled to use other articles, which would diminish the unwholesome effects of this bread; but men in that low situation to which he had alluded, would not have it in their power to have recourse to any such means, unless the bill was passed for increasing their wages. With respect to the association proposed, he should object to it in its present form; not that he did not wish the object for which it was proposed to be obtained, but because he was afraid it would set a bad precedent. If members were once called upon in that kind of way, to subscribe to a particular association, it might be extended to others of a different nature. He had no objection to the house coming to a resolution to recommend such an association, and every member in his individual capacity should recommend and enforce it by example in the place where he lived; and he certainly would do it in the parish where he lived; but he could not for one moment consent to sign the association, as at present proposed.

The resolution was put and carried.

LIBEL ON THE CONSTITUTION.

Mr. Sheridan brought up the second report from the committee appointed to inquire who was the author of a pamphlet, entitled, "Thoughts on the English Government." It was ordered to be printed.

DECEMBER 14.

LIBEL ON THE CONSTITUTION.

The order of the day for the further consideration of the reports of the committee appointed to inquire who was the author of a libellous pamphlet, entitled, "Thoughts on the English Government;" when the clerk read the second report of the committee, and the resolution of the house on the 26th of November.

MR. SHERIDAN said, after the resolution which the house had just heard, he should be much disappointed if there should appear any want of unanimity on the subject of the atrocious libel which had been so successfully traced to its source. He could not, however, help expressing an apprehension from what had fallen on a former evening from one of the right hon. gentlemen on the other side, that a difference of opinion might arise as to the mode of proceeding, and the measures which should be thought most likely to effect the ends of justice, and support the respectability of the house. When the first report was presented, it had been alleged by some that the evidence which had been obtained was not sufficient; by others, that it was fully sufficient to go to a direct prosecution of Mr. Reeves, either as the author, or at least, for acting as the author of the libel; by others, that the committee had stopped short at that point which was conceived to be the most important and necessary; but this mode of argument was founded on a mistake which gentlemen made as to the nature of the committee itself, which was not instituted to try a delinquent, but to inquire after, and ascertain grounds, whereupon to establish the delinquency.

Therefore, in the second report which the committee had made, in order to meet every doubt, they had taken care to leave no room for any similar objections; they had, in consequence, called upon Mr. John Owen, the publisher of the libel, who had been left in a very awkward situation by the state of his evidence on the first; on the last occasion they had questioned him if he still persisted in his refusal to give up the author? to which he replied he did, and could not think himself justifiable in doing otherwise than remaining silent; the committee had deemed this silence on the part of Mr. Owen contumacious towards the committee, and had directed him (Mr. Sheridan) as chairman, to notify the same to the house; this, he said, having done, he could not think himself at all bound to proceed further in the business than was agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, which would

not permit him at any time to rush upon measures that might by possibility, of even the remotest kind, tend to injure the freedom of the press. This freedom, he remarked, might be materially injured by either corrupting or oppressing those who were engaged in the management of an object of such delicacy and importance, taken either as the organ of liberty or of science ; he had on this occasion, too, a more satisfactory reason, which was, that the author had been clearly found out, notwithstanding the confident assertions which had been made by some gentlemen with respect to the ignorance of Mr. Reeves of the patriotic work in question. He took notice of the situation in which Mr. Reeves stood, the distinguished protection he enjoyed, and his immediate connection with, and the little suspicion a publisher could reasonably feel, under such existing circumstances, that libellous aspersions on the house of commons, and much less doctrines tending to lop that house and the house of lords off the trunk of the constitution, could originate from such a source. He then took notice of the evidence of Mr. Thomas Wright, who had given some information concerning an association, of which the author of the libel was the chairman ; from this evidence it appeared that Mr. Reeves was the leading person of the memorable club or society of alarmists, who had set the country in a flame with the bugbear tales of plots and conspiracies, treasons hatched and hatching, of designs on the Tower and the Bank, and Jacobin clubs associated to introduce the levelling and republican systems. It might at the first glance seem, that the circumstance of the chairman of such an association as that at the Crown and Anchor being the author of the libel before the house, was of a trivial nature ; but if it was considered that the chairman was himself in the constant habit of correspondence and intercourse with the Treasury, that the association of the Crown and Anchor had two thousand other societies branched off and affiliated with their mother society, and that such doctrines as the libel now before the house, by such means obtained the most rapid, and, he might say, fatal circulation throughout the country ; when it appeared that the correspondence between Mr. Reeves's mother society and the two thousand nurseries of his principles, would make fourteen folio volumes, he thought the seriousness of such a connection was indeed of but of the most dangerous and alarming consi-

deration. It was, of all the concurrences which had arisen since the revolution, the most alarming for the liberties of this country, that a man, countenanced as he was by government, with such extensive means of disseminating such detestable doctrines, should, after having circulated the wicked principles of others through every ramification of the "Society for protecting Liberty and Property from Republicans and Levellers," be himself the author of a work which struck at the foundation of the government, which asserted the inutility of the two houses of parliament, and affirmed the sole and exclusive right of the government and the law to exist in the king. When he saw such an association erecting itself on deception and falsehood, and maintaining itself by notorious treachery and boundless corruption: that the author of the libel upon which the house had already decided was the founder of this association, and in possession of such power, he thought it indeed an alarming crisis for this country, and a most important object for the consideration of the house, in the proceedings which they should now institute in order to punish the delinquents for a breach of their privileges. He then entered into a history of the Crown and Anchor Association, which, he said, was commenced in November, 1792; and observed how remarkable it was that the nation was tranquil; no fears abroad, or at home, no fears but for the issue of the war; that in one month after the society had been instituted, the nation was alarmed from one end to the other, the guards were doubled, and a host of spies were for the first time employed under the sanction of those countenanced by the King of Great Britain's ministers; arms and ammunition were provided, and the Duke of Richmond suddenly threw himself into the Tower, with all the terror that might arise from an invasion; but with what effect? After secret committees of that house had formed their reports; and after Messrs. Hardy and Tooke had been threatened with all the penalties of treason, it appeared that not even one of those hired spies could prove a single fact in any shape resembling plot or conspiracy, after every effort of power, artifice, and corruption had been exerted to bring forward the most minute and secret expressions and actions of those who had been accused. He then noticed the system of falsehood and conscious fraud upon which Reeves's association commenced; for it appeared from Mr. Wright's evidence, that whilst they adver-

tised that they would receive anonymous information, they added, as a *nota bene*, “all letters and communications are requested to be addressed to the secretary at this place.” And who was this secretary? Mr. Wright tells you that it was a man in the clouds, that it was a fiction, that no such person existed, and that even the committee did not know, nor did any one but Mr. Reeves and Mr. Wright, that it was a fictitious name. What must be thought of the credulity of that committee, and what of the conduct of him who instituted such measures, but that it was a complication of fear, of guilt, and imposture? But at the third meeting of the society it appears, that the committee was informed that the secretary was a Mr. Nobody. But it could not be forgotten what effect this anonymous system had upon Mr. Thomas Law, who, in a manner honourable to his head and heart, withdrew from that society, and exposed the dark principles of its institution. And we learn still farther, that the very resolutions which constitute the anonymous system, were carefully kept out of their books and open proceedings. But it was not merely this secret system of spies and informers, the invention of anonymous information, nor the then circulation of the proceedings of that society, which contained many particulars no less libellous than the pamphlet before the house, equally inimical to the freedom of the people of this country, the privileges of both houses, and even to that title upon which alone his Majesty held his crown; but the works of Soame Jenyns, Whitaker, and Arthur Young, had been openly recommended and circulated by that society, and the thanks of Mr. Reeves given for some of those works, in themselves treasonable to the constitution of the nation. In a work of Young’s it is stated, “that the corruption of the house of commons will always increase with the power which it may be found to possess.” And in the same work it is asserted that, “by an independent parliament, is meant one that will oppose any administration; that in every constitution there are some men without conscience, some without judgment, and others without both; that by corruption those scattered characters are collected and united, and the business of government goes on smoothly;” and finally, that “an independent house of commons is no part of the British Constitution.” When such doctrines are circulated, and when thanks are given by the circulator to the author, it is but fair to consider those sentiments as

adopted, and as made his own; and when connected with the publication of the libel now before the house, the facts connected in one view, formed an attack the most hideous that this country had known for a century to be directed against this government. He lamented that the committee had not been vested with powers more ample; as he was convinced, from what he had already seen, that they could have traced the existence of a regular and deep-laid plot to introduce despotism into this country; and to have shown that the title assumed by that society, professedly to oppose republicans and levellers, was only a cover under which both houses of parliament were meant to be overturned, and tyranny completely established on the ruins of that little freedom which now remained to the country. He then adverted to a precedent of the year 1680, when the Judges Scroggs, Jones, and Weston, were accused of countenancing despotism, wherein one of those judges expressed himself in terms the most harsh against Luther, Calvin, and Zuinglius, and against their followers: these reformers, he said, were men of such sharp spirits, that nothing would serve them but a parliament; but, for his own part, he knew of no authority to whom he could look, nor of any law but what came from the king. Such was precisely the style of Mr. Reeves and his associations; and he hoped the house would see their honour was concerned, and give signal proof of their displeasure with respect to the author of such doctrines. He forbore to fix any further opprobrium on the bills which had lately passed that house; but observed that if the house marked anything in the conduct of Mr. Reeves as unconstitutional, they could not mark it too publicly as a guide and light for others. He could not avoid remarking, however, that by the bills which had just passed, all public meetings in future were to be under the control of magistrates; that in the last commission Mr. Reeves was made a justice of the peace; and that in Westminster the mighty movers of sedition, as they were denominated, chiefly held their meetings. Now a right hon. gentleman had thought that the paid magistrates of Westminster would not be the first to obtrude themselves at any of these meetings, and perhaps he himself might incline to that opinion. He did not think such a man as Mr. Bond would, for instance, who always conducted himself in a fair and modest manner. He begged to be understood, that he made no allusion to that gentleman's former mode

of life. Whatever that might have been, when he certainly could have no expectations of his present rank, yet since he had been in office, he had always been respectable; and Mr. Sheridan thought it highly improper in the other magistrates, when he came into the commission, to refuse to associate with him, as

“The cut-purse of the empire, and the rule.”

If such magistrates as these, then, would not be the first to disperse a public meeting, who would? Why the man, of all others, would be Mr. Reeves. Mr. Reeves would make himself the chief justice of seditious assemblies, the dictator of the day; and if any person presumed to say that extravagant courts, selfish ministers, rotten boroughs, and corrupt majorities, ought to be abolished and reformed, he it is that would instantly call out to Townsend and Carpmel, and say, “Seize that fellow by the throat, away with him to prison, he is a traitor, and proclaims sedition;” because this man has previously declared that every one of these abuses is essential to our government. Therefore it is the duty of the house, after the passing of those bills, to hold out to the country an indemnity, by declaring that these abuses are not among the sacred parts of the constitution; or else in every meeting they will leave no rule for the magistrate, and no means for the people, to preserve themselves from a violation of their rights. With regard to the method of proceeding against Mr. Reeves, there had been different modes; but on that which he proposed to adopt, he hoped there would be little difference of opinion. Mr. Reeves’s doctrines and associations had been more dangerous than people might at first imagine.

When such a man was found to sow divisions, was he entitled to credit? Yet this man, from the credulity or inattention of his Majesty’s ministers had been able, by a system of fraud and imposture, to excite a degree of alarm throughout the country, which had caused that wretched disposition to tolerate the bills; and he had been able also to provoke the prosecution of various individuals. He said he had long before exposed the falsehood of charges of plots and conspiracies. He lamented the credulity of ministers, if it was credulity, that led them to believe them, and to adopt the Machiavelian principles of using base means to accomplish whatever they might conceive to be good ends, which he believed, when their imagination had been disturbed by the

artifices of Mr. Reeves, was really and truly the case, from what had fallen from a right hon. gentleman, who had asserted that Mr. Reeves deserved the gratitude of the country, and that he had been its saviour; but after what had been proved to the committee, as brought forward in the report, united with the support given by Mr. Reeves to similar doctrines, he should be sorry, though not surprised, to hear again. He then mentioned, he said, the fifth time in the house, another plot which had sprung from the association—he meant the Popgun plot, as it was called, which, often as he had noticed it, had never once been noticed or replied to from the other side of the house. He stated that two persons, J. Smith and G. Higgins, were seized and committed upon the following order of the privy council, signed by Lord Loughborough and William Pitt:—

“ These are in his Majesty’s name to authorize and require you to receive into your custody the body of John Smith, herewith sent you for high treason; and you are to keep him safe and close until he shall be delivered by due course of law; and for so doing this shall be your sufficient warrant. From the council chamber at Whitehall, this 10th day of October, 1794.”

“ To the Keeper of Newgate.”

From that time to the 10th of May, through the whole of an unusually severe winter, they were confined in cold and miserable cells, and the families of both reduced to the greatest distress. At the period when he (Mr. Sheridan) was about to propose the repeal of the act for suspending the habeas corpus, one of the persons, Smith, wrote him the following letter, which would speak for itself:—

“ FELONS’ SIDE.

“ Sir,

“ Newgate, Jan. 5, 1795.

“ Seeing in the public papers that you intend this day to move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the suspension of the habeas corpus act, I take the liberty of sending you an account of my situation. On the 28th of September I was taken into custody by a warrant from the secretary of state, and thrown into a dismal cell in New Prison, Clerkenwell, from thence I was taken to the privy council, and there examined several times. From the questions put to me, it appears that I was charged as being concerned in the plot for assassinating his Majesty. I can assure you, sir, on the word of a man, that I never heard, saw, or knew anything of the said plot till I was in the privy council. On the 10th of October I was committed to this place on a charge of high treason, without any hope of being brought to trial, having been dragged from home, leaving a wife and four small children without any support, and having lost a place of above sixty pounds a-year.

I am at this time in a dismal cell in Newgate, where nothing is to be heard but the rattling of irons from the felons : my friends cannot come to see me without being robbed, having to pass through a yard in which are some of the most abandoned of wretches. The above I can assure you are facts.

“ By taking public notice of the above, you will much oblige

“ Your obedient humble servant,

“ To R. B. SHERIDAN, Esq.”

“ JOHN SMITH.”

In this condition did this man and the other solicit trial, dismissal, or enlargement on bail ; for it is to be observed of them, that confiding in their own innocence, even with the aggravating circumstances of family distress, they asked no other favour but trial or discharge ; but neither was granted them. Mr. Smith wrote again in February, but no answer was sent. A respectable man (Mr. Parkinson) went to see him ; found him in a state truly desperate, and with a dignity of heart that reflects the highest credit on him, represented the poor man's case to the privy council, which only procured a change of apartments ; and in April he wrote again ; and he was informed that a milder letter would procure his release on any bad bail whatever. Thus a man, after the destruction of his property, the danger of his life by imprisonment, and the misery of a numerous family, is told by his oppressors you must not be a man, you must cease to feel like an Englishman : you must not dare, after the torment and distress we have heaped on you, to speak but as a slave, and lick the feet of those who have trod upon you, and proved that the tyrannical days of the French government, or of the worst tyranny that ever existed, were not worse than what an Englishman is liable to under the abuse of the law. He believed that such proceedings as had taken place never could have been tolerated, if the minds of the people had not been previously poisoned, and that principally under the mask of loyalty, by this man ; and when this proceeded from a corrupt motive, though he carried little personal animosity out of that house, he felt no mercy for him. He did not wish to touch a hair of the heads of either printer or publisher ; but when he considered all the consequences that had followed from the system of prosecutions, particularly the unhappy fate of Messrs. Muir and Palmer, and Mr. Winterbotham, with a number of other persons, down to the poor man who was imprisoned for playing *çai-ra* upon his organ, he thought no measures were too strong, no punishment too

severe. He did not mean, however, to move for a prosecution, though he had no mistrust of the hon. and learned gentleman opposite (the attorney-general). He put it to the house, whether they ought not to measure equal justice for a conspiracy to lop off the lords and commons, as for a conspiracy to depose the king? and observed, that all the precedents went to this point, where there was a high breach of the privilege of parliament. The pamphlet was not a theoretical treatise on government, but a practical exhortation addressed to the plain sense of the people. What he proposed, therefore, was to move for the censure of the house, and to proclaim that censure, by having the pamphlet burnt by the hands of the common hangman. He objected to a prosecution most peremptorily, as he wished to set an example of lenity and mercy, contrary to what Mr. Reeves himself practised; but thought it was with great reluctance he submitted to the ministers themselves whether this should not be followed up by an address to his Majesty, to remove him from any place of trust; and instead of committing him to Newgate, he designed to move, that he should be summoned to attend at the bar of that house, to receive a reprimand from the speaker, and be recommended to make a disavowal of his sentiments. He concluded with moving "That one of the said printed books be burnt by the hands of the common hangman in the New Palace-yard, Westminster, on Monday, the 21st day of this instant, December, at one of the clock in the afternoon; and that another of the said printed books be burnt by the hands of the common hangman before the Royal Exchange in London, on Tuesday the 22nd day of this instant, December, at the same hour; and that the sheriffs of London and Middlesex do attend at the said time and places respectively, and cause the same to be burnt there accordingly."

Mr. Dundas followed, and moved an amendment to leave out all but the first word of the motion, and in its place to substitute, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, humbly to desire his Majesty that he will be graciously pleased to give directions to his attorney-general to prosecute John Reeves, Esq., as the author or publisher of a printed pamphlet, entitled, "Thoughts on the English Government—addressed to the quiet good sense of the people of England, in a series of letters—Letter the first, on the National Character of Englishmen—The Nature of the English Government—The Corruptions caused in both by the Introduction of French Principles—The Effects produced by the Reformation and the Revolution upon Political Principles—The Conduct of the Whig Party

—*The Character of the modern Democrats.*—London, printed for J. Owen, No. 168, Piccadilly, 1795.”

Mr. Sheridan replied to the several arguments that had been advanced against him. As to the charge, that he and his friends had never recommended prosecutions for libels, he would say it was not necessary. Ministers had taken that matter into their own hands; the jails throughout the kingdom had been full. Here Mr. Sheridan read over a list of fifty or sixty persons, who had, in the course of these three last years, been tried and punished for libels; and many of these had been prosecuted in consequence of informations from Mr. Reeves's association, which he could prove: so it could be no reproach to opposition that they had not urged ministers to increase the list. If he did not wish to send Mr. Reeves to a jury, he did not wish to commit the privileges of the house to the king's attorney-general. If Mr. Reeves should be found guilty, perhaps the right hon. gentleman would call him a convicted innocent, as he had called others acquitted felons.

The question was then put on the proposed omission of the words of Mr. Sheridan's motion, which was carried without a division. It being then supposed that the subject was disposed of, the greater part of the members had left the house before the question could be put on the words proposed to be inserted by Mr. Dundas; and, on Sir William Dolben's requiring a division, it appeared that only twenty-nine members were present, and, in consequence, an adjournment took place.

DECEMBER 15.

LIBEL ON THE CONSTITUTION.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that in consequence of some arguments used the night before, which had, in some measure, altered his mind, he no longer objected to the prosecution of Mr. Reeves, since it was to be limited to himself, without affecting the printer or publisher of the pamphlet. In order, therefore, that there might be unanimity in the house, respecting the manner of punishing the author of that pamphlet, on which the house had already passed an unanimous resolution of reprobation, he would move, “That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to order his Majesty's attorney-general to prosecute John Reeves, Esq. as the author of a printed pamphlet, entitled, ‘Thoughts on the English Government.’”

Agreed to, nem. con

LOAN.

Mr. Smith moved, "That a committee be appointed to inquire into the circumstances of the negotiation of the late loan." Mr. Dundas adverted to an expression which was uttered by Mr. Smith, with respect to Lord North: he wished to know, if he seriously imputed corruption to that nobleman? Mr. Smith professed that he did not mean the slightest reference to that nobleman, but the transaction was notorious during his administration, that probably through his agents, a loan was made the medium of influencing a majority of the members of the house.

Mr. Sheridan observed, personal corruption never had been urged against the noble lord, though it had always been understood that he made the loans the means of influencing a majority. This was a parliamentary accusation against him; and it had not only been urged, but proved. If the right hon. gentleman disputed this assertion, he would refer him to the journals, where he would find that a committee of inquiry had been appointed; that the lists of the subscribers to the loan were produced and examined; and it was proved the loan had been dealt and sold out to members of parliament. The right hon. gentleman took fire at the imputation on the noble lord; but he rather attributed his zeal to his solicitude, lest an inference should be drawn from the conduct of that noble lord, as an insinuation against the present ministers. It had been the uniform practice of the house, indeed, to acquit the right hon. gentleman opposite of personal corruption in the negotiation of this loan; but he knew no reason why he was to do so, nor why he was to assume that he was not liable to as foul an imputation for the foul distributions of the present loan, as the noble lord was for that foul loan which he took fire at. They are two distinct things, to say the minister has no part of the bonus himself, and to say he has not contrived to make a distribution to others. He knew that in 1783, when he was secretary of the treasury, that Lord John Cavendish put out the loan into the hands of his enemies, instead of his friends, because he was determined to act upon the purest principles, by which means he was disappointed in his instalments, and made a bad loan for the public; and a charge was, nevertheless, brought against him, insinuating that he had been governed by corrupt motives. Mr. Sheridan said, when he saw the loan now made, replete with falsehood, trick, and connivance, he knew no reason why he was not to suspect the ministers of having acted improperly. He hoped the inquiry was not to be made by an upstairs

committee, or a committee of the right hon. gentleman's own selection ; but a committee of the whole house ; and he thought it would not be a free inquiry, if it were otherwise ; for if any management or selection were made, he would not think the right hon. gentleman really serious in his declarations. He wished to follow up the precedent of that loan which had been alluded to under the administration of Lord North, whom he owned he could not consider as a model of perfect purity, though he acknowledged his good humour, urbanity, and private worth. In the list produced on that occasion, the bankers were the first subscribers, as now ; though the noble lord in the blue riband, as Mr. Pitt on the present occasion had done, professed he knew nothing of the distribution. After them came a variety of subaltern agents ; and he asked whether the right hon. gentleman could not look around him, and point out who were the subaltern agents in the present loan ? He must think them children, if he pretended to the contrary. There were many who had £10,000 shares each with cent. per cent. profit ; and if he denied it, his political tutor would tell him it was trifling with the house. He hoped, therefore, a motion would be made, first for the lists of the contractors and then for the subordinate lists of the bankers ; here he begged leave to state some facts as he received them, from rumour, though he believed them to have been raised upon a sure foundation. The Lord Mayor—whom he was happy to see in his place, as, if the statement was false he might contradict it, was said to have two millions of the loan. Now it was to be remarked, that his lordship had formerly admitted the assembly of his constituents in the common hall of the city of London to be fair and legal, and he understood from the sense of the majority, his lordship promised to oppose the bills ; but, when the subsequent meeting of the bankers and loan-mongers was held, his lordship retracted his former opinion, and considered this meeting of the bankers was the criterion for him to go by. On these grounds he thought he had a right to fasten a suspicion on the distribution of the loan. He conceived much irrelevant matter had been introduced in the course of the discussion ; but observed, it was not a light matter for the house simply to consider whether the right hon. gentleman did or did not know, on the 25th of November, whether the French were already in possession of that order of things, which could justify

a negotiation for peace? Could any human being in the shape of a politician, or with the name of a statesman, and holding his head up as the ruler of a kingdom, solemnly affirm he did not know that circumstance?

Now was it asserted that the rapid decay of the finances of France, and the victories of the Austrians had produced the rise of stock; yet, at the opening of the budget, the right hon. gentleman declared that the French were not only on the verge, but in the very gulf of bankruptcy, and thus by sinking "lower than the lowest deep" he lost himself. This argument was consequently against himself; for, while he pretended that France was on the eve of a revolution, he came forward with another proposition, that the order of things in that country was favourable for a treaty. If he had heard such drivelling nonsense in any one of the sixpenny societies, which the right hon. gentleman had abolished, he should have treated it as the inconsistency of one of the most vulgar and most confused minds. The right hon. gentleman had taken care to win away the deliberation of the house from a fair examination of the case, by his two and sixpenny and three and fourpenny schemes, which as usual, he rendered as complicated as possible. Mr. Sheridan, therefore, begged leave to recal the attention of the house to the main argument, by asking whether it was a fact, after having waged war, and carried it on for four years, to establish a certain form of government in France, and where of course it must be inferred that ministers constantly watched every change, that the right hon. gentleman had not made some estimate on the probable duration of the present government when he bargained for the loan? One might have supposed from his declarations, the present council of five hundred did not elect themselves; and that four out of the five members of the council of the ancients, had not imbrued their hands in the blood of their sovereign. Yet, the reverse was the fact. Adverting to that situation, therefore, which the right hon. gentleman had so long and so unfortunately held, the house was first to determine whether he could not, and ought not to have bargained better for the public by accelerating his Majesty's message, or by postponing the loan, and getting a vote of credit for two millions? He thought there was a variety of matters connected with it, such as related to Mr. Morgan, &c. all important in themselves, but comparatively little to this con-

sideration ; and, unless the right hon. gentleman could acquit himself of the imputation, he considered there were grounds for a serious suspicion ;—if he was not guilty himself of personal corruption, he had at least, through the means of particular agents, used one of the most pernicious of bribes which was resorted to in the most corrupt of governments.

The motion was carried without a division.

FEBRUARY 21, 1796.

VOTE OF CREDIT BILL.

The order of the day was read for the third reading of this bill. Mr. Grey moved " That it be postponed till that day three weeks."

MR. SHERIDAN remarked, that it tended to destroy the power of the house of commons over the public purse, as well as the jealousy which, in all cases of public expenditure, they should be cautious to preserve. It was the peculiar privilege of that house, always to vote the money for the public services upon estimates which were to be calculated as nearly as possible to the several demands of the several departments ; and in cases of war and emergency at the end of a session, to provide for any extraordinary incident by a vote of credit. He observed, the right hon. gentleman had very studiously passed over one objection of his hon. friend, who made the motion for delay, which was the magnitude of the present demand, when compared with what had been the case under former administrations. Till the right hon. gentleman introduced the practice, a vote of credit never exceeded the sum of one million ; and if he goes on doubling at this rate, unnoticed and unchecked, why may he not next year, if the war continues, come down for five millions at once. He understood that the right hon. gentleman made no manner of distinction between the money granted by a vote of credit, and that granted upon the estimates for the common current expenses of the year. In this case the estimates are no longer of any use, since there is no certainty of appropriation. By the laws of his country, the right hon. gentleman, and every other minister, was bound not to apply the money voted upon any specific estimate to any other purpose, and constitutionally he could not do it. Yet, according to his own account, he puts all the money into one purse, and makes use of it as occasion needs. Now, to show how opposite such a mode of proceeding is to the very plea upon

which the money was required, he desired the preamble to the bill to be read. This being done, Mr. Sheridan observed, upon that plea it was to defray some unforeseen expenses. He owned the delay of the bill might create much inconvenience, but that inconvenience was the lesser evil of the two, and he was, therefore, resolved to take the sense of the house upon it.

The house then divided—for Mr. Grey's motion 25 ; against it 102. The bill was then read a third time and passed.

EXPEDITION TO THE WEST INDIES.

Mr. Sheridan gave notice that, soon after his hon. friend had made his motion concerning the expenses of the war, he should specifically move for an inquiry into the conduct of the expedition to the West Indies. Upon a former occasion the right hon. gentleman had invited it, and expressed himself ready to meet it, and he hoped the house was not so benumbed by despair and disappointment, as to suffer an affair so replete with disaster and disgrace to pass unnoticed.

FEBRUARY 26.

MR. WILLIAM SMITH'S MOTION RESPECTING THE LOAN.

The first resolution being put, viz. "That it appears to this house that the principle of making loans for the public service by free and open competition uniformly professed by the chancellor of the exchequer, has been very generally recognized as affording the fairest prospect of public advantage." To this an amendment was proposed by Mr. Sylvester Douglas, "That it appears to this house, that the principle of making loans for the public service by competition, which was introduced, and has in general been acted upon, by the present chancellor of the exchequer, has been productive in many instances of great public advantage ; but that this principle could not be applied in its full extent, to the bargain for the late loan, consistently with the peculiar circumstances of the case, and with that attention to the equitable claims of individuals which ought always to be shown in transactions with them on behalf of the public."

MR. SHERIDAN said that, oppressed as he was by a severe cold, he should not have intruded upon the patience of the house, but for something which was said, in the course of the debate, by the hon. and learned gentleman who moved the amendment ; his expressions were so pointedly directed to him that he could not sit totally silent, although he was hardly able to speak. The hon. gentleman, in authoritative phrase declared, that he gave him (Mr. Sheridan) an opportunity of retracting what he had said on

a former occasion. He was always ready to retract anything spoken wrongfully or unadvisedly ; but he congratulated himself that he preserved consistency in his declarations ; he was not in the habit of retracting, like gentlemen opposite to him ; nor did he find the necessity of so doing. Some gentlemen had, indeed, retracted their former principles and opinions. Whether it were from avarice or ambition, he could not tell ; but these gentlemen were in the habit of striking a balance between their interest and their professions ; they were accustomed, therefore, in accommodating as well as retracting. It was from a speech of his, the printed copy of which he saw in the hands of gentlemen at the other side, that all the clamour had arisen of aspersions cast on the purity and integrity of the minister. He had certainly intimated that some *rouleaus* of this immense profit had found their way into that house. The fact was certain. It had been admitted by the lord mayor, who had obligingly corrected him as to the amount of his share. He had erroneously stated it at two millions. It was, by the receiver's declaration, £2,800,000. There was no possibility of doubt but that some of this oil of influence had been sent to grease that squeaking wheel in the city, called the mercantile interest ! Every method had been taken to draw the attention of the house, in this instance, from the main question. No corruption had been suggested by Mr. Smith. The right hon. chancellor of the exchequer had come with a boast of honourable acquittal by the committee, and had said that gentlemen at his side of the house attended it ; it was true they had so. His hon. friend (Mr. Grey) and himself had gone there ; for his part he never went after the first day, nor did the report contain his sentiments. The gentlemen at his side of the house wanted a committee of the whole house, in order that the witnesses might be examined before the world, or else a select committee, composed of equal numbers from each side of the house. Either of these would have been a fair mode of proceeding, and have shown a disposition to impartial investigation ; but in the committee which pondered on that mighty loan, the opposition had not the honour of sitting as active citizens. A committee was appointed, in which the accused parties became the judges of their principal. The first lord of the treasury was tried by his secretary, and the chancellor of the exchequer by a half-pay master ! He was in a worse state even than an acquitted felon. He was

tried by a band of placemen, and had been acquitted only by his accomplices ! The right hon. gentleman, in granting the committee, seemed to be wounded in pride and spirit. The attempt to institute an inquiry was a tax upon his purity ; suspicion touched him in the pinching part, and he reluctantly complied. If the right hon. gentleman would recollect that, in the year 1783, he wanted an inquiry into the circumstances of the loan made by Lord John Cavendish, for winning the expenses of the American war, delicacy would not, perhaps, be so much offended at the inquiry now made ; particularly, if he considered how much worse the present loan was for the public in its terms, and in the manner of its negotiation. The circumstance of the Hamburgh bills was degrading to the dignity of a great nation ; it proved that the government was reduced to their last shift ; it was a matter of despicable accommodation, which shrunk from the light. The bills were illegal—they were intrinsically worth nothing—for they were drawn by nobody, and constituted a bankruptcy against the government which issued them. How strange that the right hon. gentleman should support his domineering pretensions in the war against France, by arguments drawn from the ruin of the enemy's finances ; they being, as he expressed it, in the gulf of national bankruptcy, when he himself was caught revelling in its vortex. Mr. Sheridan concluded by declaring, that he would vote for the resolutions of his hon. friend.

The house divided on the amendment—ayes 171 ; noes 23. All the other resolutions of Mr. Smith were negatived by the previous question, without a division.

MARCH 16.

LONDON WET DOCK BILL.

Mr. Manwaring moved, " That the bill be now read a second time." Alderman Lushington moved an amendment, " That this day four months do stand in the place of the word ' now.' " The lord mayor seconded the amendment.

MR. SHERIDAN agreed with the worthy magistrates in almost everything they had said. It was incumbent upon the house to hear counsel for the parties who petitioned against the bill ; and time at least should be granted for this purpose. He saw no reason to doubt the sincerity of the city in wishing to bring forward a plan. The example of the conduct of the city on a former occasion the hon. gentleman had brought forward, upon the prin-

ciple laid down in a celebrated pamphlet of late, that of visiting the sins of the ancestors upon their posterity; and it was only on this view that the corporation of London could be implicated in the folly of their predecessors. It might be argued, that any plan of this nature would injure the city of London; as West India merchants might assert that the abolition of the slave trade would ruin the trade with the colonies; and as it had been argued some years ago, that the commerce of this country would suffer by giving a free trade to Ireland,—a prediction falsified by the event; but arguments of this kind went for little or nothing with him. If the object could be effected with the consent of the city, he was convinced that merchants would not refuse the accommodation on these terms. It was said that 10 per cent. was not too high! Indeed, the hon. gentleman might not consider it a very great profit when 10 per cent. was gained upon a loan. The losses through plundering surely must be very considerable, when a new world was made from the frequency of the fact; and surely this was not a loss that the wet-docks were calculated to remedy. But the great question, since it was agreed that some plan was necessary, was, whether the purpose might not be as well answered by the city plan? There was something at first view very unfavourable in this bill: though professing to be a private bill, it permitted very considerable sums to be levied from all British ships, although the accommodation would be confined chiefly to the West India merchants. That 1700 houses should be pulled down, and 10,000 persons forced to seek new habitations, was such desolation at the commencement of a plan of improvement as did not bespeak much favour. The ultimate effect certainly would be to diminish the value of houses all over the city of London, and in time to attract the Exchange, the Custom-house, &c. to the place where the docks were to be made. He should have wished that a month or six weeks, or such a period, had been proposed for the delay of the bill, that time might be allowed, as well to hear counsel of parties interested, as to bring forward any other plans that might be in agitation.

Mr. Pitt moved, that instead of the words "this day four months," be inserted the words, "Wednesday, the 11th of April next." This was agreed to.

MARCH 20.

MAROON WAR IN JAMAICA.

General Macleod moved, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that he may be pleased to order, that there be laid before this house a copy of all the correspondence of which government is in possession, relative to the mode of carrying on war against the Maroons in Jamaica."

MR. SHERIDAN did not think it necessary to trouble the house long on the present question, after what had fallen from the hon. secretary (Mr. Dundas). It gave him the greatest satisfaction to hear that government had ordered an inquiry to be made into this transaction immediately after the report of it came to their knowledge. But he had heard with much concern what fell from an hon. gentleman near him (Mr. Barham), because it carried with it the idea of extirpating a whole race of people. This he could not sufficiently reprobate; and surely the savage means used to overcome those unfortunate men were not necessary, when their number was stated so low as four or five hundred. It was surprising, that without the abominable aid of blood-hounds, the whole force of Jamaica could not succeed in subduing those unfortunate Maroons, who, by oppression, the breach of treaty on the part of the English, and in vindication of their rights, had been driven to take up arms. So far, by the blessing of God, the resistance of a minority, acting on just principles, in one quarter of the globe, was at least formidable. The hon. gentleman who spoke last asserts, that they were not to be treated as Maroons but as rebels. Now it seems that the resistance of an independent nation, with whom this country signed a solemn treaty, which it afterwards violated, was to be considered as a state of rebellion. But there was no ground which could justify the use of blood-hounds; and it was unnecessary for him to state, what the house well knew, that it was not only just, but politic, to abate as much as possible the rigours and horrors of war. The present objects of the war in Jamaica, seemed to be the extirpation of this unhappy people, or to drive them by cruelty to nourish such a resentment of their wrongs, as to render them incapable in future of observing amity or good-will towards their enemy. The hon. gentleman opposite to him seemed to consider it as of little importance, whether the war was just on our part or not. He was of a contrary opinion. The idea of extermination, always horrid and unjust, was certainly much aggravated, if it

turned out that these people were at war with us merely because they had been injured. The Maroons were, in fact, an independent people. They were a useful race, and even, in a commercial view, were of considerable advantage to the country. The hon. gentleman had mentioned the origin of the war, but he had not stated all the circumstances. It originated in a Maroon stealing a pig ; but his punishment was a violation of a treaty which subsisted between the British settlers and the people. He was whipped. The man returned with his stripes on his back to his nation. It was an article of the treaty that no Maroon should be punished by the government of Jamaica ; but if he committed a crime that he should be given up to his own nation for punishment. In the present case, this article was evidently infringed. Redress was demanded by the Maroons, and as no redress was given, war followed. For the honour of the national character it was necessary that an inquiry should be instituted. If the Maroons were injured, a war of extermination could not be contemplated without the utmost horror. He hoped, however, that something would be done to bring back this people to that state of harmony and good-will which had been found so necessary for the peace, and, in some degree, to the prosperity of the island.

The motion was withdrawn.

APRIL 13.

PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE WEST-INDIA EXPEDITION.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that he had come down on purpose to move for certain papers relative to the West India expedition. He was encouraged to think that they would not be refused, when he recollected the desire which had been expressed, at a former period, for a full and impartial inquiry into the subject. If the prospect of peace had been nearer than at present it appeared to be, it might be said that such an inquiry would be instituted with greater propriety after the re-establishment of tranquillity ; but in the prospect of continuing in the same calamitous course in which we had hitherto proceeded, and under the same weak and blundering councils by which we have been guided, an inquiry into past errors became more necessary than ever. He was surprised to find, since he came to the house, that the king's ministers had any objection to the production of these papers. He should, however, now move that they be laid before the house ;

and if they were refused, he would name a future day for the discussion. Mr. Sheridan then moved for a string of papers relative to the West India expedition; among which were—

An account of the number of men sent out to the West Indies, under Sir Charles Grey, in the close of the year 1793.

An account of the number of men drawn from this expedition and placed under the command of Lord Moira.

An account of the number of men taken from Sir Charles Grey, after the conquest of Martinique and Guadaloupe, and sent to St. Domingo.

A return of the reinforcements sent out to St. Domingo, with the dates of their sailing and of their arrival.

A copy of all the letters which were written by Admiral Christian and General Abercrombie, respecting the delay of the West India expedition.

An account of the mortality of the troops lying on board the transports while they remained at Portsmouth.

An account of the number of ships foundered, and of the men that were lost after they had sailed; and

A copy of the letter for the appointment of a board to superintend the transport service.

Mr. Dundas objected to the motions, and Mr. Sheridan proposed to adjourn the debate to Tuesday se'nnight; which was agreed to by the house.

APRIL 18.

LETTER OF THE COUNT DE SOMBREUIL WITH RESPECT TO THE UNFORTUNATE EXPEDITION TO QUIBERON.

MR. SHERIDAN rose to move for the production of a paper which had before been moved for by an hon. friend of his (General Tarleton), and had been refused. After that refusal the house might judge of his surprise and astonishment, when he saw the letter of the Count de Sombreuil, published to-day in the *True Briton*. He did not hesitate a moment to pronounce that publication authentic and genuine, being influenced, in his opinion, both by the complexion of the journal in which it was published, and the particular features of the letter itself. He spoke in the recollection of those persons who heard his hon. friend move for the production of that letter, and he reminded them that his hon. friend assigned as his reason for doing so, that it might be possi-

ble the letter contained not only an exculpation of the Count de Sombreuil himself, but a crimination of those persons who advised and conducted the unfortunate expedition in which he perished. He appealed to the recollection also of the house, as well as to the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham) who refused the motion, that the production of the paper was refused because it related solely to a business of a delicate and private nature. How completely then was he disappointed and astonished on perusing the copy published in the *True Briton*, which he had every reason to believe authentic, to find it, so far from relating exclusively to any business of a private nature, to belong entirely to matters of public moment; and the only excuse he could allege for the right hon. gentleman's not having made such a declaration was, that he had either read it in a slight and cursory manner, or from the distance of time, and the multiplicity of business in which he was engaged, that he had wholly forgotten its contents, or it would be impossible that he should have given it such a colour; for it did not appear from this letter that there was any paltry recrimination upon the persons who advised and conducted that unfortunate expedition, but a foundation for a charge of the most marked criminality. It might be true that the right hon. gentleman had not the sole hand in that expedition, or that he had no farther share in advising it than the rest of his colleagues; but whoever were the authors and abettors of it, there was very clear evidence that there was not one word about any business of a private nature in the letter from Portsmouth, while there were expressions which conveyed the strongest condemnation of sending that expedition out in the most gross, the most treacherous manner. He undertook, however, to read the letter to the house, in which he could find nothing, even by construction, of a private nature.

TRANSLATION OF THE FIRST LETTER.

“ On board the *John*, Portsmouth Road,

“ Sir,

July 8th, 1795.

“ The short stay which I made at London not having permitted me the honour of seeing you more than once, and my sudden departure having prevented me from conversing with you on several points of importance to me in my present situation, I have sufficient confidence in your sagacity to be convinced that I shall find such instructions as will serve me for a guide, and enable me to support the responsibility attached to my conduct, as well towards you as towards the troops under my command.

“ A full conviction of the necessity of subordination, joined to a zealous devotion to the cause in which I have embarked, induce me to fly with precipitation at the first signal I receive, and never allow me to urge the smallest objection. I say nothing of the discretion which a government has a right to expect from those it employs ; I have long since given sufficient proofs of mine ; and I have reason to believe that they are such as will enable me to obtain, at least, those marks of confidence which are due to my situation.

“ I have the honour to observe to you, sir, that I am going with troops, of whose destination I know nothing but by public report ; neither am I acquainted with their means of subsistence, nor, in the smallest degree, with the rules by which I am to regulate my conduct ; what will be necessary, with regard to ammunition, with which I am not, to my knowledge, provided, and with regard to the support of those with whom I am to act ; the means by which I am to carry on my correspondence with you in a distant situation, and from whom I am, in all cases, to receive orders, are points on which I request you to give me such instructions as will serve as a basis for my conduct.

“ I have the honour also to request that you will let me have an officer from the department of inspection. If you send me such a person, pray select a man who speaks both languages, that he may, on occasion, assist me in the translation of your letters ; and that your orders may only be known to an officer chosen by government. I have the honour to be, with respect,

“ Your very humble servant,

“ COUNT CHARLES DE SOMBREUIL.”

This was the private letter, he said, which the right hon. gentleman had stated to be interesting to the writer's feelings only, and not at all so to the public. And now he would read the other, addressed to the right hon. gentleman, which accompanied that to Sir John Borlase Warren, and which was represented to be sent to him as a testimony of particular respect and gratitude :—

TRANSLATION OF THE SECOND LETTER.

“ From the Count de Sombreuil to the Right Hon. William Wyndham, dated Aurai, 22nd of July, 1795, received by the hands of his servant, who remained with him till the hour of his death.

“ Sir,

“ The letter which I have written to Sir John Warren will give you every information in my power to afford, as well on my present situation, as on past events ; I will not remind you of the letter which I wrote to you from Portsmouth, as you doubtless feel the force of the remarks which I there made : you must be sensible how much my heart has to suffer in these last moments, independently of the regret which I experience for the fate of my companions ; you know what sacrifices an order so prompt obliged me to make.

“ I request you, sir, to be so kind as to give the bearer, a faithful man, who has never abandoned me (and whom the losses I have sustained incapacitate me

from rewarding), the sum of five hundred louis, to be shared with my other servants. This request will not appear indiscreet, as I have lost several government securities to a greater amount.

"I also recommend to you, sir, the two persons about whom I spoke to you before I left London.

"I have the honour to be, sir, your very humble servant,

"COUNT CHARLES DE SOMBREUIL."

"To Mr. Wyndham, Secretary at War."

Now the house would connect the remarks there made with those in the preceding letter, and perceive what general affinity there was to business of a private nature. This letter displayed all the characteristics of a brave mind; it did not reproach the right hon. gentleman for his conduct, but it reminded him of the remarks in the former letter—that he was dispatched with troops upon an expedition, of the destination of which he was ignorant; that he was ignorant also of the particulars relative to their command, their subsistence, and their ammunition. Here was none of that whiffle-whaffling stuff which the right hon. gentleman had pretended, and only a couple of lines which could be construed to relate to that beautiful and accomplished woman to whom his affections had been pledged, and who had since been reported to be disordered in her mind. He concluded, that when a man of such worth, valour, and honour, was ready to perish in what he conceived to be a just cause, it was a shame and a reproach to his Majesty's ministers to abandon him, as they had done, to his fate; and, conceiving that these letters contained the strongest proofs of the gross and scandalous manner in which the expedition to the coast of France had been conducted, he moved "That copies of the letters written by Count Charles de Sombreuil to the secretary at war be laid upon the table."

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day.

Mr. Sheridan declined taking the advantage which this motion gave him of speaking again at length. From the tone and manner of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham), if he had not claimed the privilege of an angry man, he should have suspected the right hon. gentleman supposed that high words would go for proof and argument. He wished him, when his anger was diminished, to read the letters over again, as he might perceive his present construction to be erroneous. He concurred with his hon. friend (General Smith) in the idea, that if Sombreuil had known that Puisaye was to command the expedition, it was pos-

sible he might not have left England. The calamity that attended that expedition he attributed solely to the division of councils; for the coward, Puisaye, secured his retreat, while the other brave companions of his voyage were left victims to his treachery.

The motion for the order of the day was put and carried without a division.

The house then went into a committee of

WAYS AND MEANS.

Mr. Sheridan begged the attention of the committee only a few minutes, for he would not enter at large on the various topics that had been brought under consideration. He would first observe, that the complaint of moneyed men, at not being permitted to contribute their share to relieve the necessities of the state, was a sufficient proof of the flourishing condition of our resources, and left no necessity for eloquence to declaim on the contrast between our situation and that of the enemy. They were obliged to have recourse to violence to extort a forced loan, while moneyed gentlemen among us, with the generous impulse of patriotic magnanimity, were rivalling the Roman Curtius, and vieing with each other who should first plunge into the unfathomable gulf of the sinking fund. He alluded to the many financial contests that had taken place between him and the right hon. gentleman; and it was of importance that he had recorded his opinion on the journals of the house. The right hon. gentleman, after having long attempted to delude the house, had, at last, come over to his opinion. Questions of finance were not fit subjects for declamation and eloquence. When peace was obtained, he would undertake to prove, that, instead of a surplus million, the peace establishment could not be under twenty-three millions. He stated the expenditure of the peace establishment of 1783 at seventeen millions; and if, during nine years' peace, it had never decreased from this, he had a right to assume that if, at the end of this war, the peace establishment was twenty-three millions, it could not be less for the next nine years. The long-proposed day, when the revenue of the country was to be equal to its expenditure, had never yet come, and, he verily believed, never would come.

The chancellor of the exchequer's resolutions were put, and agreed to without a division.

APRIL 21.

WEST INDIA EXPEDITION.

MR. SHERIDAN moved, that the adjourned debate on the papers for which he moved on a former night, respecting the war in the West Indies, be now resumed.

Mr. Pitt said, he doubted whether he had any right to say anything to the hon. gentleman's motion for these papers, except that he should not vote for laying them before the house, as he had on the former night delivered his sentiments upon the question.

Mr. Sheridan observed, he was considerably surprised that the minister should make such an attempt to prevent the discussion of this subject. The minister had said to-night, that he had already animadverted against granting these papers to the house. He could not recollect anything that was said by the right hon. gentleman upon this subject that looked like an argument. When the subject was before the house, he said the debate should be adjourned, in order that it might be debated; and now it was brought forward, he said he would not consent to granting the information that was desired. This was all the argument of the right hon. gentleman. He understood that the minister wanted time to prepare himself for this matter. He had that time, for the debate was adjourned: but he had made very bad use of his time, for he had now nothing to say, except that he was not in the humour to give the house any information on the subject. This was part of the minister's plan. There had, of late, been some endeavours—which had hitherto been too successful—to introduce into that house a very novel and a very bad practice, by which the minister superseded the inquisitorial power of that assembly; it was to refuse to the house all means of preliminary information, when on the face of the matter there was ground for inquiry into his conduct, and when, perhaps, the result of that inquiry would be his own complete disgrace. This practice was entirely unknown to former parliaments, and contrary to the established practice of the house of commons; but it would be a very convenient thing to the minister if he could establish this novel practice; for it tended to conceal his blunders, and to prevent the house from recording his incapacity. We should find that it was the constant practice of parliament in all former wars, when such information was moved for, to grant it in the first in-

stance. This was the constant practice of Lord North during the American war. No papers were then withheld from the house, except such as, by their publication, might create danger to the government or to the public : and such, no man of sense would ever wish to be published. But the reverse was the case with the present minister, for he made it a standing rule to refuse every paper, excepting there was some proof that an inquiry ought to follow the information, and that there was ground to charge administration with misconduct. With the present minister, therefore, granting a paper which conveyed any information was the same thing as granting an inquiry. But in reality it was no such thing ; he was not bound to move for an inquiry after these papers were granted ; and that for the plainest of all reasons, for the papers, when they appeared, might entirely justify the minister in his conduct throughout the transactions to which the papers relate ; and therefore it was the interest of the minister, if he was conscious he had acted well, to be eager to produce these papers. This war was said to be different from any other in which this country had ever been engaged. Certainly the manner of conducting it would lead us to think so ; and the manner in which information was refused in this war, was very different from what had ever taken place before. This was the only war in which the misconduct of ministers was never to be made the subject of inquiry. Nay, there was not even an attempt to be made in a British house of commons to inquire into the misconduct of ministers in this war. They claimed an exemption from all inquiry exactly in proportion to their incapacity. The minister said, "I will not grant you papers ; move your inquiry." Now his answer was this, he could not tell whether it would be necessary to move for an inquiry until he had seen these papers. But the minister, although he would neither grant an inquiry, nor any information which might lead to it, yet he would grant what he called a *discussion*. Mr. Sheridan said he had come forward with a statement founded, perhaps, upon rumour, and desired information ; he therefore moved for such papers as were calculated to afford that information. The minister started up and contradicted every word he said, but refused the information he desired ; and then observed, now you have had a full *discussion* of the subject. This was the minister's constant practice ; but what integrity was there in it?

How could the public be satisfied with such behaviour? what proof had they, unless they took the minister's own word, in his own favour, for satisfactory proof that the affairs of government are properly conducted? Last session he brought this subject forward; he was told by the minister he lamented that the lateness of the session prevented him from agreeing to an inquiry; there was nothing he desired so much, for that he was persuaded it would redound to the honour of his Majesty's servants; if, therefore, it should be moved this session, he should be glad to assent to it. How stood the matter now? The motion is made and the minister opposes it. Now he would ask if there was any one man in that house who would stand up and say, that there was no reason to apprehend there was any blame whatever imputable to those who have had the conduct of the war, or in the expedition to the West Indies? Would any man say so, when he recollected what had happened after that brave, gallant, and admirable officer, Sir Charles Grey, left the West Indies?—after his brilliant conquests there? He believed there was no man, even among the minister's friends, hardy enough to make that assertion. How had Sir Charles Grey been treated by the king's ministers? From the hour he left England to the hour he returned in 1794, not one man of reinforcement had been sent to him to the Leeward Islands. He believed not a single man. Of this he did not speak with absolute certainty, but he believed not one man had been sent. If he was misinformed upon this subject, it was in the minister's power, and it was the minister's duty, to refute him. Now, if in consequence of this negligence of ministers, we had lost the greatest part of the conquests of Sir Charles Grey; if, from the delay of equipments in 1794, men had been kept in floating pest-houses until they perished by disease; if, by a culpable, scandalous, murderous negligence of ministers all this had happened, and he was ready to prove it had, was that, or was it not, matter for the inquiry of that house? Most assuredly it was; but how were these things to be inquired into before the proper documents were on the table of the house?

Here Mr. Sheridan took a general view of what happened with respect to Admiral Christian's squadron, and contended there was much and very culpable neglect on the part of ministers. But instead of allowing an inquiry, they resented the idea of it.

This was the modern practice of administration. It was illustrated completely in the conduct of the secretary at war the other day, when the letter of the Count de Sombreuil was called for. He said he would not consent to lay it before the house, because it was called for under an idea that an injurious opinion had been said to be formed of him (Mr. Wyndham) in consequence of that letter. Thus the resentment of the right hon. gentleman, and his unwillingness to indulge the house with any information, had made him forget the whole tenor of the letter. He had said it was entirely a private affair, whereas it contained not one word on any but public affairs. Here Mr. Sheridan condemned, in a very severe manner, the conduct of his Majesty's ministers towards that brave and unfortunate officer, whom, he said, they had totally deluded, else he would not have proceeded on the service in which he was sacrificed. Should the proper information be granted him on this point, he would pledge himself to make out such a charge against the minister as would justify an impeachment against him. He did not now say he could prove where the whole of the misconduct lay, but there was prodigious misconduct somewhere, with respect to this expedition to Quiberon; and the purpose of part of this motion was, to discover the source of that misconduct. Nor was there anything new in calling for this sort of inquiry. If a captain lost a ship, it was a matter of course to try him by a court-martial, whether he was really to blame or not, and so the case should be with regard to ministers. This was a scandalously planned expedition, and an inquiry ought to be instituted into it. Ministers were not so tender in the case of others as they were with themselves with regard to inquiries. They had caused that gallant officer, Admiral Cornwallis, to be tried by a court-martial for not shifting his flag and proceeding to the West Indies. There had occurred no disobedience of orders, but a misunderstanding merely. He did not say they were not right in instituting this trial, although the effect of it was a little whimsical. The sentence was curious, for it stated that that able and gallant officer had done both right and wrong. He said that blame was imputable to him, but no censure merited. This he stated to show the readiness ministers had to accuse others, and consequently it was not very gracious to them to resent the idea of being themselves accused. He should now proceed to state to the house the mo-

tions which he intended to make as mere preliminary matter ; for he would, if they were granted, follow them up with solemn accusations against ministers. The motions were to this effect :—

“ That an account be laid before the house of the number of men destined for the expedition to the West Indies, under Sir C. Grey, at the close of the year 1793.”

“ That an account be laid before the house of the number of men withdrawn from that service, in order to form an expedition to the coast of France, under Lord Moira.”

“ An account of the number of men, who, after the conquest of Martinique, St. Lucie, and Gaudaloupe, were detached to St. Domingo by Sir C. Grey, in obedience to orders from home.”

“ That the different applications made by the several commanders-in-chief for reinforcements, since the appointment of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, be laid before this house, or such parts of the same as can with safety be communicated.”

“ That returns be laid before the house of the several reinforcements which actually arrived in the West Indies during that period, specifying the distribution of the force, and the dates when they arrived.”

“ That an account be laid before this house of the number of men which have been sent to St. Domingo from the commencement of the war, specifying the places from whence they were sent, and the dates when they arrived.”

“ That the appointment of Sir Ralph Abercrombie to the command in the West Indies be laid before the house.”

“ That the number of regiments ordered—specifying what regiments—on the expedition under Sir Ralph Abercrombie, be laid before the house.”

“ That General Doyle’s appointment, and the regiments ordered to serve under him, be laid before the house.”

“ That there be laid before the house extracts of all letters from Admiral Christian and General Abercrombie, from the date of their appointment respecting the delay of the sailing of the expedition.”

“ That there be laid before the house a return of the number of ships foundered or missing, and the number of men lost or missing belonging to the expedition under General Abercrombie.”

“ That a return be laid before the house of the number of officers and men lost by disease in the West Indies since the

arrival of Sir Charles Grey to the end of the last year, specifying the lost sustained in each regiment."

"That there be laid before the house an account of the number of men who died on board transports at Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, or in ports of Great Britain or Ireland, destined for the West Indies, in the years 1794 and 1795."

"Copies or extracts of letters or memorials on this subject from the officers commanding the troops on board the said transports, from the mayor of Plymouth, or from Lord George Lenox, governor of Plymouth garrison."

"Extracts of all letters from Sir Ralph Abercrombie and Admiral Christian, respecting the delays of the expedition under their command."

"Copy of his Majesty's letter of service, appointing a particular board for the conduct of the transport service."

"Copy of the correspondence between the said board, his Majesty's secretary at war, and the board of ordnance, respecting the West India expedition."

"An account of the total expense incurred in the transport service for the West India expedition in the years 1794 and 1795."

"An account of all hospital stores sent to the West Indies for his Majesty's service in the years 1794 and 1795, specifying the ships in which they were sent."

"A copy of a proclamation issued in the name of his Majesty, in St. Domingo, signed 'Parker and Forbes,' and dated Mole St. Nicholas, December 10."

"An account of the number of men serving in England, under the command of the Earl of Moira, in the years 1794 and 1795."

"An account of the French regiments raised and embodied in England, in the years 1794 and 1795, distinguishing the number of men in each regiment, and stating the services on which they have been employed."

Having read these motions, he proceeded to comment on the circumstances that rendered each of them necessary, in the course of which he took a view of the whole conduct of the West India expedition; the neglect of the equipment; the cruel manner in which the troops were treated—they were allowed to perish for want of care being taken of them at our own ports; the manner in which remonstrances had been made to government by the officer at Portsmouth, and by Lord George Lenox; the inatten-

tion of ministers to these remonstrances ; the deplorable condition of the troops in the West Indies in consequence of excessive fatigue and the want of reinforcement ; their want of proper clothing, and particularly their want of shoes, in consequence of which they were known to have moistened the burning sand with blood streaming from their feet while they were on duty ; the lamentable mortality among them, some regiments having lost two-thirds of their number for want of medicines ; the madness of the expedition to Quiberon and Isle Dieu, whither we had sent scare-crow regiments, had ransacked all the jails in the kingdom for soldiers ; and if we had not robbed, we had defrauded the gibbet. Did not the house conceive that some explanation was necessary with respect to the several expeditions planned against the coast of France ? Was the numerous staff employed under Lord Moira, a circumstance that required no explanation ? Why was that numerous armament kept idle and unemployed, and suffered to be the theme of so much contempt and ridicule throughout the country, which never could attach on the gallant nobleman who then commanded it, but on the ministers by whom it was planned ; for, so far from any blame being imputable to the noble earl, he was confident that he would not be adverse to appear at the bar of that house to show that the whole disgrace, inseparable from this expedition, was to be attributed alone to the weak and imbecile conduct of his Majesty's ministers. He would ask, why the troops in the West Indies were so cruelly and shamefully neglected, at a time when such gaudy, expensive, and inactive camps were kept up throughout the country ? Nothing, he asserted, but a miracle saved at that period the West Indies, and their salvation was totally owing to the sickness and diseases that prevailed among the troops of the enemy. He next adverted to the wretched state of the British army ; the 29th regiment, he was well assured, lost 400 men ; and, in June, the hospitals in Martinico were crowded with British officers and British soldiers, who were not only in want of medicines, but even bandages to dress the wounds they had received in gallantly fighting against the enemy. He next adverted to a fact which, he affirmed, was well known to several of the officers—that ninety men had been re-landed on the beach, covered with wounds, and many without limbs, where, for a night, they were left to the mercy of the elements. When there were such

strong grounds for inquiry, how, he asked, could it be resisted? The death of General Vaughan, he asserted, was owing to his chagrin in not finding those reinforcements sent out which he demanded. His next motion was for "An account of the number of men who died in the ports of Plymouth, Southampton, and Portsmouth;" also for "Copies of letters sent from the mayor of Portsmouth and Colonel Lenox." These were for the purpose of informing the house that, day after day, many of the troops in those places expired in consequence of being cooped up in the transports. Many dead bodies were thrown overboard, and others were carried indecently through the streets without coffins. The chancellor of the exchequer, on a former occasion, held his information cheap, and even presumed to deny the fact; but he had several letters from officers on board the fleet, complaining of the circumstance, who, if the house would grant a committee, he had no doubt, would appear at the bar, and prove the authenticity of his information. He next adverted to the fleet under the command of Admiral Christian; and here he would assert, that ministers were again culpable; for he could not admit it as a justification for the delay of the fleet, that the transport board and board of ordnance suffered some idle *etiquette* to injure the public service. He could state, on the best authority, that the melancholy disasters which occurred to that fleet were not to be attributed to mere adverse winds, but to the negligence in not sending it out in small detachments, which would have arrived in time to reinforce the army, and yield the necessary succour to the islands. Mr. Sheridan next proceeded to read the following proclamation:—

"ST. DOMINGO.

"Mole St. Nicholas, Dec. 10, 1795.

"BY THE KING.

"We, William Parker, Esq., rear-admiral of the red, and Gordon Forbes, Esq., major-general and commander-in-chief of his Britannic Majesty's forces by land and sea.

"His Britannic Majesty, feeling for the distresses of the colony of St. Domingo, has received favourably the submissions of a great number of the inhabitants of every quarter, and granted them his protection.

"It was to be believed, that all who had been instructed by the excess and the universality of calamities, would have hastened to unite themselves under his tutelary authority.

"Thus his Majesty did not think it proper at first to display that appearance of power, which would have announced the conqueror rather than the

emancipator. He sent only a small force, which was sufficient to secure the general police, if the effervescence of opinions had been calm, but insufficient for reducing by force the great body of the mistaken inhabitants.

“The beneficent views of his Majesty have been partly frustrated, when he concentrated his forces on some particular districts to which he has restored their tranquillity, their worship, and their opulence.

“He has abandoned, for a moment and with regret, the remainder of the colonies to the ravages of anarchy.

“But his Majesty owes to the glory of his arms to complete by force the work which he undertook from generosity. He owes it to public morals to annihilate a system destructive of all the social bonds which unite the colonies among themselves, and which unite the whole to one sovereign.

“He owes to his personal sensibility to hold forth a succouring hand to a multitude of worthy men, who groan in every part of the island, and invoke his protection. He owes to his clemency the pardoning of errors. In fine, he owes to his justice the punishment of those who persist in refusing the paternal and regular government which is offered them, and who, after having made acts of submission, break their oaths by committing acts of rebellion.

“His Majesty, by a continuation of naval victories, has so reduced the marine of the French republic, that it is absolutely impossible for the government of that country to send any aid to its partisans in St. Domingo. He has even forced the Convention itself to proclaim, by an express decree, its impotency in that respect.

“His Majesty has, therefore, determined to send to St. Domingo such a body of forces that all resistance shall henceforth be impossible.

“In confiding to us the command of his forces by sea and land, his Majesty has commanded us to fulfil exactly the views by which he himself is directed.

“We bring then to all the inhabitants of St. Domingo, and to each individual, peace or war, prosperity or destruction.

“We promise, in the name of the king, that those who submit willingly, shall find, under the protection of his Majesty, the pardon of their errors, individual safety, and the preservation of their property.

“Those who, after a voluntary submission, wish to leave the island, shall be at liberty to embark for the American continent, or for France, upon taking an oath not to bear arms against his Majesty during the war.

“We declare, in the name of the king, that those who shall resist his arms, shall experience all the rigour of the laws of war, and that whoever violates an oath of fidelity, shall be punished with death as a rebel.

“Given in the house of the King, at Mole, Dec. 10, 1795.

(Signed) “PARKER AND FORBES.”

Mr. Sheridan proceeded to state that, if the papers for which he moved were produced, he would prove to the house a most solemn and serious charge of misconduct and mismanagement on the part of ministers. If they feel bold on the occasion, they should feel grateful for the opportunity he gave them of vindicating

cating their characters, and exculpating themselves from those charges with which they stand arraigned. He next adverted to their affected solicitude of peace. He must observe, there was nothing before the house to justify them in saying there was at this time any prospect of peace. He hoped and trusted that some opportunity would arise, in which they should have an answer from the minister, what the prospect of negotiation was. He hoped that we should all know in a regular manner the result of the negotiation lately attempted; for silence upon such a subject was extremely dangerous. The impression that had been already made out of doors was considerable; and, although some persons might think that we are at war now, on account of the arrogant claims and unreasonable pretences of the French, he was convinced the general impression was, that we are at war, not on account of the arrogant claims, intolerable pride, or unreasonable pretences of the French, but because the minister of this country has not made a sincere attempt to negotiate. Such was his opinion; and he thought it fair to speak his conviction upon that subject. But whether the war be now imputable to French or to English counsels, nothing will insure future success so much as an inquiry. Therefore, assuming, for the sake of the argument, what he never would admit, that the French were the aggressors; assuming, what he knew to be false, that the war on our part was just and necessary, and even unavoidable; assuming all these things merely for argument, he would still affirm, there was every reason for that house to enter into the inquiry for which his motions were intended to pave the way; and therefore he trusted he should not be opposed upon this subject. He then concluded with his first motion.

Mr. Dundas replied, and concluded with desiring, "That if the hon. gentleman wished for an inquiry, he would give his hon. friend and him time to consider the twenty motions which he had submitted to the house that they might know which to accede to, and which to reject."

Mr. Sheridan said, that he considered the proposition of the right hon. gentleman for a short delay, in order to consider what papers he should grant, as perfectly fair. But he wished to call the attention of the house to the reason why he had so long delayed bringing the subject forward. He certainly, at the commencement of the session, when he was said to have menaced ministers on this point, expected that an inquiry would have

taken place into the whole conduct of the war. At that time an immense armament was preparing to set out for the West Indies, and, had he then made his motions, it would have been said—“Do you wish to disclose to the enemy the state of the islands? do you wish to make known their wants at the very moment when means are taking to afford them the requisite supply?” Now the campaign was over, and the season for action past, it could not be urged that any danger could arise from disclosure. The whole speech of the right hon. gentleman went to accuse him with delay, and want of candour in bringing forward his motions. He had not attempted to show that any communication which he demanded, could, in the smallest degree, be injurious to the public. He hoped that when he had considered the motions, he would be prepared, precisely, to state in what respect they could be productive of danger. The right hon. gentleman had contested his assertion with respect to Sir Charles Grey. It now, however, appeared, from his own admission, that Sir Charles Grey had not the use of one single man. What was the argument of the right hon. gentleman? that Sir Charles Grey did not want reinforcements, else he would not have sent three regiments to St. Domingo, and afterwards dispatched a fourth to the same quarter. Except Sir Charles Grey had dispatched this force from the instruction of ministers, or in the confidence of larger reinforcements being sent out for the security of the islands, the right hon. gentleman attached to him a heavy responsibility. If he had been so miserably mistaken with respect to the security of the islands, if he had acted on his own authority and judgement, then undoubtedly he, and not ministers, was responsible. But having the solemn assurance, and being in the daily expectation of the arrival of a larger force, he took upon himself to dispatch those four regiments, then ministers were accountable why they had neglected to send out that force which was essential for the security of the islands. On this subject he should feel it necessary to bring forward an additional motion, “That Sir Charles Grey be directed to attend at the bar of this house.”

General Tarleton asked whether, in sending the regiments to St. Domingo, Sir Charles Grey followed his own inclinations or the instructions of ministers?

Mr. Sheridan remarked, that this was a delicate point. He understood that Sir Charles Grey was always of opinion, that

the force which he had was insufficient for the security of the islands. Sir Charles Grey never did, never could make a declaration that those islands could be retained without an additional force. But was not the inference which the right hon. gentleman obviously meant to draw from his statement—that Sir Charles Grey, on leaving the islands, was perfectly satisfied with respect to their security, and the adequacy of the force left to protect them? But would Sir Charles Grey, he asked, have acted as he did, except in the conviction that a larger force was to be sent for their protection? He must persist therefore in his motion for the attendance of Sir Charles Grey, and the only question he should ask him at the bar was,—“Whether, upon sending away the regiments, and leaving the islands, he thought them in a state of security, except on the supposition of the arrival of additional reinforcements?”

The debate was adjourned to the 28th.

APRIL 22.

DOG TAX BILL.

Mr. Dent moved, that the committee on the dog tax be deferred till Monday on account of the absence of the minister, when he would propose entering into that stage of the bill, whether he was present or not. He would also take the sense of the house that no difference should be made between assessed and unassessed houses; and also upon the application of the whole produce of the tax to the relief of the poor rates.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he did not know how the bill concerned the chancellor of the exchequer at all, except there was some special provision in it against a destructive animal, with “William Pitt,” upon his collar, which had been found killing sheep. He was not at all surprised that any creature of that right hon. gentleman should live upon the public. He seriously advised, however, the secretary of the treasury to have another bill prepared; for the clauses of the present were so absurd, that he was confident the bill would be thrown out.

APRIL 25.

DOG TAX BILL.

The order of the day for the commitment of this bill was read. Mr. Dent moved, “That the speaker leave the chair.”

MR. SHERIDAN expected that a motion would have been made to withdraw the bill, and on that account he formerly recom-

mended his Majesty's ministers to have another ready, for he conceived it would be losing time to attempt to amend it. He had never before seen a bill so absurd and objectionable throughout, and indeed he was not sorry that it was so, for it appeared to him a just punishment for the pride and presumption of those persons who, because they retain a seat in that house, imagine themselves so many chancellors of exchequer, and impatiently step forward to propose new taxes. Instead of being desirous to take the management of finance out of minister's hands, he thought it would be better for them to leave it where it is; because, by leaving ministers in the undisturbed possession of the privilege of imposing taxes, they left them a responsibility for the heavy burdens they laid upon the people, to defray the enormous expenses of those wars their indiscreet ambition occasioned, and consequently all the odium. Now, in regard to the bill itself, he never met with one more extraordinarily worded; and the folly of it extended even to the title; for, whereas the title should have been "A tax bill," it was entitled, "A bill for the better protection of the persons and property of his Majesty's subjects against the evil arising from the increase of dogs, by subjecting the keeping or having such dogs to a duty." Hence, instead of supposing, as it generally had been supposed, that dogs were better than watchmen for the protection of property, people might be led to imagine that dogs were guilty of all the burglaries usually committed. In the preamble, also, there was the same species of phraseology: for it begins—"Whereas many dangers, accidents, and inconveniences," which, to be sure, was a beautiful climax! "had happened to the cattle, and other property of his Majesty's subjects." Now, he had never before heard of any particular accidents happening to property from the hydrophobia, except in the case of cattle. In the *Adventurer*, a periodical paper published by the ingenious Dr. Hawkesworth, he remembered, indeed, a sort of humorous account of a dog that bit a hog in the streets; the hog bit a farmer, and the farmer bit a cow; and, what was very extraordinary, each conveyed his peculiar quality to the other: for the hog barked like a dog, the farmer grunted like a hog, and the cow did her best to talk like the farmer. Now, he thought, there must have been something like this disposition in inanimate things also, by the conduct of the hon. gentleman in

looking so carefully after property ; for, unless an instance had occurred of furniture's behaving in a disorderly manner, or a dumb waiter's barking in consequence of the hydrophobia, he conceived such a phrase could not have been introduced. The next part he had to notice was a clause—the blank of which he hoped would never be filled—that very solemnly stated, “ For and in respect of every such dog, and for and in respect of every such bitch,” a sum hereafter to be fixed was to be paid, and a register of such payments fixed on the church-door where the parties reside. So that, if the bill passed, they ought to pass another to enlarge all the church and chapel doors throughout the kingdom, for what with one tax and another, no modern church or chapel door was capable of containing a register of them all.

There was another clause, which was to enact that, whenever a person did not pay the duty, no action should apply against any person or persons, for destroying, or converting such dog or dogs, bitch or bitches, to their own use, as were not paid for. Now, if this clause was absolutely to remain, and any person did destroy or convert, as the phrase is, another person's dog, he would most probably assume that it was not paid for ; or otherwise, by what means could it commonly be proved ? So far the bill was repugnant to the principles of humanity ; for it was nothing less than a death-warrant against that valuable race of animals. Besides, he wanted to know what principle the bill proceeded upon, that the same privilege should not be also allowed with respect to horses, since there was a certain species of dogs, such as pointers, setters, &c. that were scarcely less valuable. According to the same mode of reasoning too, he did not see why there should not be a general scramble for all the hats upon the heads of those gentlemen who did not pay the hat duty ; nor why any person should not convert to his own use the powder another man wore, if he suspected that man had not taken out a license. It was true, that after any person had lost his dog in this manner, a clause was provided whereby he might bring an action and maintain a right to recover damages from the converter ; but how would it happen if the dog, still fond of his former attachments, should follow his old master ? That master might, in such a case, be whipped as a dog-stealer, though he should afterwards gain an action and prove the prosecutor the thief. He abhorred the

bill for its inhumanity, because it was an encouragement to massacre; and even if the inhumanity of it were entirely out of the question, he should consider it ill-timed, in point of policy, inasmuch as it was brought forward at a time when a part of this useful species was co-operating with the combined powers, by maintaining, with unparalleled ferocity, the cause of religion and humanity. In short, it was showing such ingratitude to our allies as could never be justified. He came at last to one qualifying clause, which was intended to enact that puppies, when born, should not be liable to the penalty. But he wished to know at what time they were to be made liable, and by what parish register they were to ascertain the birth of puppies, for he thought there would be some difficulty in getting people to come forward and record precisely every hour what bitch litters. A doctrine had been inculcated that dogs devour the sustenance of the poor, and therefore we were now to be in the state of a besieged garrison, and feed upon the fare of dogs and cats. The bill, in this instance, tended to defeat its own object; for could it be supposed that the poor, at this moment of dearth and scarcity, could afford to divide their scanty meal with such animals? and if they did, what was the conclusion but that they would rather deprive themselves of some of the necessities of life than lose their dumb but faithful companions? Upon the score of humanity, he had still another objection to offer. If the bill passed, there would be so many dogs knocked on the head, that it would tend to harden the minds of the common people, and familiarize them to scenes of cruelty and murder; and the mere sight of so many curs hanging at the doors of the lower orders of the people, already too frequently complained of on account of their brutality to speechless animals, might lead to far more fatal consequences. If the tax were levied only upon hounds and sporting dogs, he should not oppose it, because it would only tend to the diminution of the few pleasures which induce gentlemen to spend their fortunes on their own estates. Upon these grounds he wished the bill might not be persisted in.

The question being put that the speaker do now leave the chair, it was carried in the negative. Mr. Sheridan then moved, "That this house will, on this day three months, resolve itself into a committee."—Carried.

APRIL 28.

WEST INDIA EXPEDITION.

Mr. Dundas moved, "That the adjourned debate be resumed on the motion, 'That there be laid before the house an account of the number of men destined for the West Indies, to serve under Sir Charles Grey in the year 1793.'" The order of the day being read, *Mr. Dundas addressed the house, and concluded a long speech by observing, that he should bring forward some motions relative to the production of papers on the general subject, while he also intended to oppose some of Mr. Sheridan's motions, and amend some others.*

MR. SHERIDAN said, that he had never come down to the house with less expectation of hearing a long speech, or with less intention of making one himself; and he never was more surprised than at the manner in which the right hon. gentleman had chosen to go into the discussion of this subject. As he had wished that every document necessary to afford accurate information should be produced, in order to form the basis of the discussion, he deprecated the idea of the right hon. gentleman reading official papers not regularly before the house, for the authenticity of which the right hon. gentleman would have credit, and which he had brought forward in this way, to make that impression upon the house which might obstruct the effect of any future consideration of the subject, more regularly introduced. The right hon. gentleman had perverted the usual mode of proceeding. He had gone into the papers before they were submitted to the house, made his defence before he was accused, and stated his exculpatory proof before his trial. If he did not, however, say something at present on what the right hon. gentleman had advanced, the impression he meant to make on the house would be fixed. The papers might be produced; but, before they were printed, and the discussion fairly brought forward, many delays might intervene, and the right hon. gentleman might refer to the present debate as a full exculpation of his conduct. It had been said that, upon this subject, he had spoken in a churlish manner, which, indeed, he did not recollect to have employed, and which certainly was not usual with him. Still, however, he must avow, that with whatever good humour he might be disposed to treat his Majesty's ministers, particularly the right hon. gentleman, that, as political characters, he wished to have no intercourse with them, but across the table of the house of commons. The hon. gentleman had, indeed, kindly invited him to communications of a more pri-

vate nature, to pay a visit at the Horse Guards, where he believed, too, a bottle of excellent wine might be presented; yet he must decline such intercourse, as it would betray a degree of political coquetry, the suspicion of which he did not wish to incur. He had, it was true, on particular occasions—that of Muir and Palmer, and another young gentleman—waited privately upon the right hon. gentleman in his official capacity, and he would confess, that if he were to be upon such terms with his Majesty's ministers, the right hon. gentleman would be the person with whom he would be desirous to communicate. In his former speech he had declared, that he had no private communication on the subject of West India affairs with that gallant commander, of whom the right hon. gentleman had spoken so highly; and, if the circumstances of his political connection might be supposed to have afforded him opportunities of conversation upon these subjects, he would say again, that upon such occasions he had carefully abstained from entering upon it, and he believed that person would have known his duty better than to have divulged any part of the expedition in which he had been officially engaged. As to the instructions of that officer, he had only reasoned hypothetically, not from precise information. He thought he had some right to complain of the right hon. gentleman, for the manner in which he came forward with this information. The hon. gentleman had, in the whole course of his argument, assumed that the papers, for which he intended to move, would be granted; and certainly he had a right to suppose that any motion, coming from that side of the house, was more likely to be carried than a motion from another quarter. He would not be at all surprised, however, that after his papers were moved for, the production of them should be opposed by influence even more powerful in that house than the right hon. gentleman's, and that an hon. friend of his would come forward, acknowledging it was a truly noble display of personal ingenuousness, but it would be incompatible with the interests of the public service to communicate so much information to the house. Though the right hon. gentleman (said Mr. Sheridan) may have been a rash suggester, he may have a discreet friend near him; nor was it the first time he had known the openness of one minister corrected by the discretion of another. From the whole of this speech, however, instead of being satisfied with his defence, he had only been a thousand times more con-

firmed in his opinion, that the deepest degree of criminality attached to his Majesty's ministers on account of the manner in which they had conducted the war in the West Indies. After a speech of four hours and a half, the right hon. gentleman had removed no foundation on which he had wished to institute an inquiry. The right hon. gentleman himself confessed that though he now, from better information, acquitted the various official boards of any blame, he had originally felt considerable indignation at their conduct; how then could he be surprised that others should feel as he had done, or discover blame where he himself had thought censure was merited? The question, however, now was, whether the right hon. gentleman had succeeded in removing the dissatisfaction which it was natural should arise on account of the delay in sending reinforcements to the West Indies? It was said, that the small establishment of this country, at the beginning of the war, had limited the exertions of government. This was a language he never heard without alarm. If our former peace establishment was described as miserable, reduced, and contemptible, what idea did it lead us to form of a future peace establishment? To this deplorable state, in which ministers had found themselves at the beginning of a war with France, particularly in the West Indies, they ascribed the disasters which arose in its course. Sir Charles Grey was to have had 10,000, but set out with only 6,000 troops, and only limited exertions could be expected from this force; and the right hon. gentleman admitted, in the finest language of panegyric, the greatness of the merit of Sir Charles Grey, whose success far exceeded the most sanguine expectations which could be formed. Never had he heard the right hon. gentleman celebrate the gallantry and merit of a character with greater warmth; but, from the fineness of the words, he suspected they were borrowed from his right hon. friend near him (Mr. Pitt). It was wonderful, while he was thus so loudly celebrated in words, that this gallant and meritorious officer was the only person who had not, by the advice of ministers, received some signal mark of royal favour. He only got fine words, instead of being rewarded with substantial marks of the bounty of the sovereign. Still, however, he was not without his reward; for he possessed the satisfaction of conscious worth, the admiration of his brethren in arms, and the approbation of his grateful country. While he saw their pane-

gyric thus confined to barren words, he could lay less stress on their approbation. When the troops destined for the West Indies were dispatched under the Earl of Moira, the right hon. gentleman discovers that the state of the country required this sacrifice, and demanded the preference of an important to a less important service. This was not the language held at the time this detachment was made. Then it was contended, he well remembered, that this detachment would not cripple the exertions in the Leeward Islands; but, perhaps, from the perusal of official papers, the right hon. gentleman's memory was now refreshed. It was said only a regiment or two had been promised, and, beyond this, Sir Charles Grey had no reason to expect reinforcements; but ministers were not to be acquitted upon this miserable quibble. The quantity of reinforcement was not to be measured by what Sir Charles Grey had thought necessary in the commencement of his career. When new conquests were achieved, the very nature of things dictated the necessity of reinforcements to maintain them. Sir Charles did not humbly solicit new reinforcements; the brilliancy and the extensiveness of his acquisitions demanded them in a language which could not be misunderstood; and it was the duty of ministers to have provided for what they could not fail to observe would be required. The hon. gentleman had said that he (Mr. Sheridan) had criminated Sir Charles Grey, by affirming that the detachment of troops to Jamaica and Barbadoes was improper, and that it was hazarding the safety of the Leeward Islands. But, as his hon. friend (Mr. Grey) had well explained, the conduct of Sir Charles Grey on that occasion was influenced by the expectation that reinforcements sufficient for the protection of the Leeward Islands would quickly arrive, and that the French force in the West Indies would gain no accession by reinforcement from Europe. Without this well-grounded confidence, the conduct of Sir Charles Grey, in making such a detachment, would have been deserving of blame. If the attack on Guadaloupe had been made by troops in the West Indies, when the commander pronounced the islands in a state of safety, then the fault might have been imputed to him; but, if the contrary was the case, the argument of the hon. gentleman was a mere quibble, and the whole guilt devolved upon his Majesty's ministers. But, although the sailing of the French fleet was admitted to be an event which could not be prevented, yet the disasters in the West

Indies were imputable to ministers in another point of view. In August, 1794, the news arrived of the disaster which befel Guadeloupe, accompanied with an urgent requisition for 6000 men. How this disaster was occasioned he did not condescend to inquire; but, if he would permit an inquiry to be instituted, it would be found that it was owing to a want of troops, and to a want of necessaries for the troops which were there. Not only did not the reinforcements arrive, but the troops were destitute of clothing, and were overwhelmed with the fatigues they had encountered.

The state of England again was urged as a reason why reinforcements were not sent; and one fault was defended by the avowal of another. There were only 17,000 troops in the kingdom, and of these 3000 were destined for the marine service; but, he would ask, how came the marine service to have been previously neglected? This was merely shifting the vulnerable part. Out of these, however, 9000 were ordered for the West Indies—what hindered their sailing? It blew a contrary wind, and the French fleet, it was said, jumped out of Brest as soon as our grand fleet put into port to refit. But why were they not sent out in detachments, as had been advised by Sir C. Grey? Or was it to be sustained as an excuse for the delay, that we had not a fleet which could meet the French fleet at sea. As well might it be said, that if the French should be so mean to take such an advantage against a gallant enemy, as to land an army on the coast of Ireland when our fleet was in port, that no blame would be imputable to the executive government. As to the accommodation on board the transports, he would give the right hon. gentleman credit for his humanity and his concern for the health of the troops; and, if there was any neglect in this department, he did not believe that it was personally imputable to him; but he insisted that the effect was as he had represented, and that every day immense numbers were thrown overboard, who died of sickness and disease, occasioned by neglect, and the want of proper arrangements for preserving the health of the men while on board the transports: and if this was the case, surely blame was imputable to some person. On whom this blame attached would be found on inquiry. In the spring, 1795, the islands were in imminent danger; requisitions were made for reinforcements, and it was resolved to make greater exertions,

but the means could not be found. There was only 31,000 regular troops in England. The French had taken Holland, and in such a situation it would not have been safe for the country to have sent a large force on foreign service. Here he could not but remark a strange contradiction in their argument. Some time ago, when the militia and fencible corps were greatly increased, it was represented, this force would be sufficient for the internal defence of the country, and that it would enable us to apply our regular army to foreign service. Both propositions, however, could not be true. Either part of these 31,000 troops might have been spared for the West Indies, or the militia and fencible regiments were insufficient for the purpose for which they were raised. Even in this emergency, an expedition was sent to the Cape of Good Hope, the blame of which the right hon. gentleman, with a sort of monopolizing magnanimity, was pleased to challenge to himself. "We have got," said he, "the key to the East Indies, and, please God, we shall keep it." This was certainly comfortable news to the stadtholder; "but," said the right hon. gentleman, "the stadtholder was not strong enough to hold it, but please God we shall take care of it for him." This, in his opinion, amounted to a declaration that ministers never wish to see what was called the regular government of Holland re-established, and that they are quite pleased with the system of republican anarchy which at present prevails in that country. A scheme was at last formed of sending 27,000 men out to the West Indies. But the difficulty was, how they were to be got. Here the right hon. gentleman had adopted the most disgraceful mode of defence that had ever been attempted before a British house of commons. He said there was a mighty army upon paper; but when it came to be reviewed, it was found to be good for nothing. When members came forward to parliament, with an account of the army expenses, they represented it as a more splendid establishment than even Louis XIV. could ever boast. But when a requisition was made to furnish men for actual service, it was found to be composed of trash unfit to be trusted on any expedition. Raised, as they had been, upon a system of corrupt jobbing, they consisted of children and enfeebled old men, with a parcel of boys at their head. The remedial operation which was adopted, was to bring forward the Duke of York, as the retriever of the British army and the restorer of

its discipline. The hon. gentleman was also profusely, and very justly, liberal of his encomiums upon his Royal Highness; nor was he very abstemious in his claims of merit for himself. Before his plan could be put in execution, an immense number of tremendous difficulties were to be conquered. The regiments were to be reduced, and marched from one end of the kingdom to the other in order to be drafted, and a rendezvous was to be held at Southampton, for a general review previous to their embarkation. The ordnance service could not be provided, on account of their limited scale of operations admitted by the foundry at Woolwich. Transports could not be provided, on account of our increased and increasing trade, and double winds (a curious phrase) were requisite to convey the ordnance stores from Woolwich to Spithead. In fine, the expedition had always difficulties to encounter, and unfortunately the difficulties always got the better of it, and incredible disgraces had always been the fruit of incredible exertions. What, he asked, would have been said in the days of the late Earl of Chatham, if he had adduced such apologies for the failure of an expedition? And he reminded the right hon. gentleman, that incapacity, as well as neglect, was criminal in those who obtruded themselves into high situations for which they were not fit. Not a week before the 10th of November, Admiral Jervis sailed with a wind which would have carried the whole expedition to the West Indies. But it seems it could not be got ready till the 27th of November, the consequence of which was, all those accumulated disasters which ruined the fleet and defeated the enterprize. If ministers were permitted to proceed upon such principles of blundering incapacity, they might give up the contest with France altogether. The expeditions of the French are conducted in a very different manner. None of their plans were frustrated by the want of ordnance, or of transports, or of double winds. Every measure was executed with vigour, promptitude, and decision. Rather than have been disappointed in a great design, by the tedious process of ordnance preparations, or the delays of feeble minds, the late Earl of Chatham would have wheeled the ordnance from Woolwich to the most distant point of the island. But the weakness of ministers was uniformly mischievous and contemptible. If the papers he required were granted, he pledged himself to move an inquiry into the conduct of the war in the West Indies;

and, if successful in that object, to follow it up at least with a resolution of the strongest censure.

Mr. Sheridan's motion was put and carried. He then moved, "That an account be laid before the house of the number of men withdrawn from that service, in order to form an expedition to the coast of France, under Lord Moira;" which, after an amendment confining it to certain dates and specifications, was agreed to. The next motion, "An account of the number of men, who, after the conquest of Martinique, St. Lucie, and Guadaloupe, were detached to St. Domingo, by Sir Charles Grey, in obedience to orders from home," was put and carried. The fourth motion, "That the different applications made by the several commanders-in-chief for reinforcements, since the appointment of Sir R. Abercrombie, be laid before this house, or such other parts of the same as can with safety be communicated," was withdrawn, on the undertaking of Mr. Dundas to give all the information in his power upon that head. The fifth, "That returns be laid before the house of the several reinforcements which actually arrived in the West Indies during that period, specifying the distribution of the force, and the dates when they arrived," being amended, by confining it to dates, &c., was agreed to.

Mr. Sheridan then moved for an account of the appointment of Sir John Borlase Warren to the expedition to Quiberon, and also that of General Doyle, together with an account of the regiments serving under him. Mr. Sheridan observed that the right hon. gentleman, in the course of his speech to-night, never made an allusion to the expedition to Quiberon; he was very wise to avoid it. He (Mr. Sheridan) also omitted that expedition in his speech, which, in him, was a foolish omission. This expedition certainly, to a great degree, impeded the West India expedition, and some account of it was therefore proper to be laid before the house, when the West India expedition was to be discussed.

Mr. Pitt objected to this motion; and after some observations by Mr. Sheridan, it was put and negatived.

Mr. Sheridan then moved,

"That there be laid before the house extracts of all letters from Admiral Christian and General Abercrombie, from the date of their appointment, respecting the delay of the sailing of the expedition." This was also put and negatived.

Mr. Sheridan then moved,

"That there be laid before the house a return of the number of ships foundered or missing, and the number of men lost or missing, belonging to the expedition under General Abercrombie."

Mr. Dundas said, that the ships missing were four in number, but it was impossible to know how many, or whether any of them were foundered, or whether they were captured. If the hon. gentleman wished to have the names of the ships which did not arrive at Barbadoes, a list of these might be made out, but other information could not be given to him. The question was then put and negatived.

Mr. Sheridan wished to know whether the right hon. gentleman meant to state, that the expedition to Quiberon composed part of the expedition to the West Indies ; whether the force sent to the West Indies in the aggregate, as ministers contended, or as he contended, should have been sent in detachments ? Was Lord Moira to go to the West Indies ? He should, in order to explain this, move,

“ That there be laid before the house a return of the general and staff officers belonging to the regiments in England, serving under Lord Moira, in the years 1794 and 1795.”

Mr. Dundas promised to give the substance of this information in another form. The motion was withdrawn.

Mr. Sheridan then moved,

“ That there be laid before the house a copy of the instructions given to Sir John Borlase Warren, relative to the expedition to Quiberon in June and July, 1795.”

Mr. Pitt opposed it on the general ground which he had stated already, that the expedition to Quiberon had no connexion with that to the West Indies, and that they should be considered in separate discussions.

Mr. Sheridan maintained that they were connected, for that the troops which were sent to Quiberon and Isle Dieu, ought to have been sent to the West Indies, and the blame rested with ministers that these troops were not sent to the West Indies.

Mr. Sheridan then moved,

“ That there be laid before the house an account of the number of men who died on board transports at Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, or in ports of Great Britain or Ireland, destined for the West Indies, in the years 1794 and 1795.”

Mr. Pitt opposed this motion. The account could not be given accurately ; besides, if it could, it would only afford a melancholy picture, the examination of which could produce no good.

General Smith thought this answer a very extraordinary one, and supported the motion.

Mr. Fox enforced the propriety of ministers assigning better reasons for refusing information to the house than they had done in the discussion of this business. The motion was put and negatived.

Mr. Sheridan next moved for

“ Copies or extracts of letters or memorials on this subject from the officers commanding the troops on board the said transports, from the mayor of Plymouth, or from Lord George Lenox, governor of Plymouth garrison. The motion was then put and negatived.

The remainder of Mr. Sheridan's motions were all agreed to, excepting that

for laying before the house the correspondence of the ordnance and transport board, which, after a conversation in which Mr. Grey, Mr. Sheridan, the Secretary at War, Mr. Fox, General Smith, and Mr. M. Robinson took a part, was negatived.

Mr. Dundas then moved for a long list of letters of different dates, 1794 and 1795, from Sir Charles Grey, Sir John Jarvis, General Williamson, and other naval and military commanders in the West Indies. Ordered.

APRIL 29.

BILL FOR ABOLISHING EXISTING GAME LAWS.

Mr. Curwen moved the second reading. Captain Berkeley moved, "That it be read a second time this day three months."

MR. SHERIDAN agreed with his hon. friend. He was always an enemy to the existing game laws, because he was an enemy to injustice and oppression. He thought it an odd idea of the right of property, to say property was the creature of the law; but if it was so, the law ought to follow up its own principle, and protect it. Was it criminal for a man to destroy the animals which destroyed his property? Yet that was the principle of the existing law. Persons have been transported for invading that property, which it was lawful for animals to destroy, that they might afford sport to a few qualified people; and in this manner has property for a long time been the sport of law. If every man was permitted to share in the amusement on his own estate, he would be desirous to preserve the game upon it for the sake of that amusement, and not be anxious to annihilate it, as he does now, from a just indignation. And he was apprehensive, that if game were saleable also, instead of having the country paled round with gibbets, as it now is, it would contribute greatly to reduce the penal code; for, by the act of George I. many persons had suffered imprisonment for life, for partaking of that pleasure which the law decreed exclusively to others; but which no principle of right, humanity, or justice could defend. Though he saw no chance that the bill would ultimately be successful, yet he wished exceedingly that it might be committed, and the objectionable parts more particularly pointed at. At all events, he hoped that the act of George I. might be repealed, for nothing could more disgrace our laws.

The house divided on Captain Berkeley's motion—ayes 65; noes 17: majority against the bill 48.

MAY 9.

SUPPLY.—FOREIGN CORN.

Upon the resolution being moved for granting the sum of £438,035, for defraying the expense of foreign corps, raised for the service of Great Britain,

MR. SHERIDAN said, he should object, in the most positive terms, to this country's continuing to employ a set of men, who, it was apparent, were men that could not in any manner, or in any place, be depended on, and whom it was impossible, without betraying the interests of this country, to send either on an expedition to the West Indies, or any other place where the troops might be necessary. He did not perfectly understand what might be the destination of the troops that were the objects of this expense, nor how many regiments of them at present existed; neither did he know where they were at present; but this he knew, that the employment of emigrants against their countrymen, had been attended with fatal consequences to this country, and had been productive only of that expense and disgrace which, he was well assured, the continuance of such an absurd system would but tend to increase and aggravate.

The secretary at war answered.

Mr. Sheridan replied to what had fallen from the right hon. secretary at war, concerning the failure of the Quiberon expedition being classed among the unforeseen calamities of civil war. If ministers will employ men who are unworthy of trust and confidence, who have proved themselves so on every occasion where they have been trusted, what can be expected but defeat, ruin, and disgrace? As to the Quiberon affair, he had always thought it, and should ever think it, one of the worst planned, most inhumanly mismanaged expeditions, that ever disgraced the annals of this or any other country.

The resolution was agreed to.

REAL SUCCESSION TAX BILL.

Mr. Pitt moved, "That the order of the day for the further consideration of the report of this bill should be read, and the report now taken into consideration." Mr. Crewe objected to the tax, and moved, "That the report be taken into consideration this day three months."

Mr. Sheridan said, he could not give a silent vote on the question. He would not follow the learned gentleman (the attorney-general) through the long detail of the difference between the

English and Scotch laws. What had fallen from the gentlemen on both sides of the house, many of whom could not possibly be actuated by party motives, would, he trusted, induce the right hon. gentleman to grant the delay, which, he perceived, in a certain degree was wrung from him, in consequence of the arguments which he had heard this night. The attorney-general had made some general observations on taxes, and asserted that, in his mind, the present tax was less objectionable than any he remembered to have been lately imposed. But the present, Mr. Sheridan was convinced, was the most execrable measure of finance that ever came before parliament; and if he excepted the legacy bill, it was merely because it had been sanctioned by an act of the legislature. He did not scruple to say, that both with respect to the Scotch and English laws, the present bill was utterly impracticable! and if time were allowed, even till Thursday, any gentleman who examined it with a keen eye, would see that it abounded with the grossest errors and inconsistencies. He was against any tax that shifted the burden to posterity; for he thought that those who submitted to measures which necessarily produced taxation, should themselves feel the burden, as it might operate to prevent them from supporting the present irrational system of warfare. He had used this language on a former occasion, and he would use it again, though it might be perverted as heretofore, without doors, by those who made him say, that he wished that the people were heavily burthened with taxes. The present measure was defended on the grounds, that it was a tax to support a war calculated to put a stop to the progress of Jacobin principles, and to prevent the poor from robbing the rich. Was the measure desirable on the grounds, that his Majesty's ministers were justifiable in robbing the rich in preference to the poor? Such an argument reminded him of the shepherd in the farce, who said he had a mode of curing the sheep of the rot; but when asked how? he replied, by *cutting their throats*.

The house divided—for the consideration of the report now 81; against it 52.

MAY 10.

WINE DUTY.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that notwithstanding the notice he had given of his intention to move for a clause to render the stock of

wine in the hands of private gentlemen equally liable to the new duty as that in the hands of dealers, he should decline making any motion to that effect. It would certainly be unjust to introduce excise officers into the cellars of private gentlemen, although not more so than to tax the stock at present in the hands of dealers. It was far from his wish to have the excise extended to private families, as well from his dislike of the system, as it might have a tendency to make servants spies on the proceedings of their masters. He could wish that the new duty on wines should be confined to future importations, and not made to include the stock at present on hand; and he must caution the minister against laying too heavy a duty on the article, as such a step would, in all likelihood, in the course of a very short time, operate as a prohibition. Although it might appear that the consumption of wine, during the last year, was greater than in other preceding ones, yet he should recollect the old proverb, "that an additional hair may break the camel's back." His intention was to move a clause to the bill, by way of rider, providing, that the wines imported in consequence of the recent orders sent abroad, which may arrive by the first of July next, should be liable to the new duties, payable by instalments, in the same manner as the duties upon stock in hand.

Mr. Pitt in reply observed, if Mr. Sheridan had a rider to the effect mentioned ready to be added to the bill, he should have no objection to adopt the proposition.

Mr. Sheridan said, he considered it due from him to apologize to the house for not being prepared with a rider, pursuant to his intention; but he was completely taken by surprise by the right hon. gentleman, as he felt nothing more astonishing than that he should adopt any proposition submitted by him to the house.

MAY 13.

REAL AND PERSONAL SUCCESSION TAX BILL.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the third reading of the bill for granting to his Majesty a tax on the real succession of landed estates. The order being read, he moved, "That the bill be read a third time this day three months, which was agreed to."

MR. SHERIDAN said, he hoped the right hon. gentleman had now considered the personal succession tax, and was prepared to give it up; but it was too much to expect that he would give up

two great fortresses of revenue in one night. If the hon. gentleman derived any credit by abandoning the real succession tax, he should make it complete, by renouncing the personal succession tax, which was equally exceptionable in its principle, and more dangerous in its operation. He was astonished that this bill had raised so little the attention, and excited so little the opposition of the commercial world. It had been said that the landed gentlemen were like a sheep, which allowed itself to be shorn without complaint, while the moneyed gentlemen were like a hog, that squeaked when a single bristle was plucked. Here, however, the observation had been completely belied. Indeed, some address seemed to have been displayed in dividing the two bills, though the same in principle, and thus, by dividing the interest, contriving likewise to divide the opposition. Upon the ground that the hon. gentleman had stated for withdrawing the real succession tax, it was not entirely abandoned, but was only set asleep, and might be revived when the objections were removed. The reason was stated to be, that the landed interest was already more severely taxed in proportion than the mercantile interest. He had formerly stated, and he now repeated, that though this were the last campaign of the war, the first measure that the right hon. gentleman would be forced to take would be to lay on permanent taxes to the amount of three millions, and to raise the peace revenue to twenty-three millions. This was his fixed opinion; and he had no objection to have his words taken down, should it, on any future discussion, be found convenient to recur to them. In laying on taxes to this amount, it would soon happen that commercial property would be sufficiently taxed, and landed property would have no ground of exemption upon the score of inequality, and the reason stated for giving up the real succession tax, would cease to operate. Mr. Sheridan then stated, that the principles of the two bills were the same, but the one already passed was much more dangerous. The different effects of these two bills, he considered as preposterous; if a man dies worth £50,000, and leaves landed estates to that amount to his heir, government, by one bill, receives no benefit: but if such a personal property be left, by virtue of the other bill, it is authorised to seize upon part of the produce. If a merchant dies, a certain duty is to be paid to government, on the calculation of all his commercial concerns, speculations, and debts, and

a balance struck upon the whole, before a division of his property could be made; a period of five or six years frequently took place before his affairs could be settled, and in the mean time, the executor would be debarred from paying off the amount of the legacies till the quantum of the government demand by this tax was ascertained; and to whom, Mr. Sheridan asked, was all this to be submitted? To certain subordinate officers appointed by the commissioners of the stamp duties throughout every county in Great Britain; he supposed there must be 20,000 such officers to carry this into effect. Mr. Sheridan here stated a case, that a man leaves an extensive trade to his son, reserving one-tenth part of it to a natural son; he apprehended that, by this act, the officer would be bound to know that the executor really pays the tenth part of the profit of the trade; and how, he asked, was it possible for him to know this without an inspection of his books and affairs? An evil would unavoidably grow out of this, not only of publishing to the world what the deceased might wish to have concealed, but also it would go to the extent of appointing, not wards of Chancery, but of the Treasury, on behalf of such son. Let the right hon. gentleman, he added, farther consider the delicacy of a man's credit engaged in large commercial concerns: many of the largest capital and credit might be subject to temporary embarrassments. If commercial men would turn this matter maturely over in their minds, Mr. Sheridan said, they would be convinced that it would prove such a blow to commerce, as would prevent it from ever flourishing in this country. He stated another objection—that by taxing a man's trade, manufacture, and industry, it held out an inducement to him to retire from business, and live upon his estate, by which means he would be exempted from the tax, thus imposing a penalty upon industry, and holding out a bounty to indolence. He showed that this bill, which professed to be taken from a law in Holland, was of a more oppressive nature, for in that country a man's concerns in trade were not affected by the operation of the law. Mr. Sheridan wished that the right hon. gentleman might have time to reconsider the bill, and to consult commercial men on the subject—and said he would leave the result to the discretion of the lords of the treasury. He adverted to the difficulty which might occur, as to supplying the amount of this tax, which was calculated at £100,000; and hinted, that

if the King of Sardinia's subsidy of £200,000 was to be withheld from him under present circumstances, that the chancellor of the exchequer could be at no loss for a remedy, and might even think himself obliged to the French for having so opportunely tossed that sum into his hands. He hoped, that at any rate the chancellor of the exchequer would attempt the repeal of it in the next session of parliament. He concluded with moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to authorise the commissioners of the stamp office to postpone carrying into effect the act passed this session of parliament, imposing a duty upon personal property, if ordered so to do under the hands of the lords of the treasury."

OCTOBER 18.

INVASION.—AUGMENTATION OF THE FORCES.

The order of the day being read, and the house having resolved itself into a committee to consider the clause of his Majesty's speech respecting an invasion—that paragraph of the speech was read as follows:—

"You will feel this peculiarly necessary at a moment when the enemy has openly manifested the intention of attempting a descent on these kingdoms. It cannot be doubted what would be the issue of such an enterprize; but it befits your wisdom to neglect no precautions that may either preclude the attempt, or secure the speediest means of turning it to the confusion and ruin of the enemy."

Mr. Pitt concluded a long speech by moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to raise a certain number of men in the several counties of England, and from the different shires, stewarties, towns, and boroughs of Scotland, for the service of his Majesty's army and navy."

MR. SHERIDAN said, in two points I am happy to agree with the right hon. gentleman, namely, that it will be a fitter opportunity for discussing the merits of the plan which he has suggested to the committee after the bills are introduced, and that the scheme of preparation which he has now opened, is nothing more than following up the vote of the house on the first day of the session. I must confess, however, I expected that the right hon. gentleman would have accompanied his statement of defensive operations with some explanation of the reasons why it is necessary to take any such measures at all. The plan which he has in view, if put in execution, will certainly impose additional burdens upon the people, and considerably subtract from the industry of the nation, in which its greatest riches consist. And before proposing a plan which inevitably has this tendency, it certainly is no unreasonable expectation that its necessity should

have been evinced. I am aware that it would be improper to demand much precision of explanation upon the subject, but because it would not have been consistent with his duty to give a particular disclosure of circumstances, surely that was no reason why he should have left the necessity of the formidable arrangements which he has proposed, upon the vague and indefinite basis on which they at present rest. And if this house of commons is not disposed to follow the example of the last parliament, to sacrifice the rights of the people to the regal prerogative, and to surrender with the blindness of implicit confidence the direction of public affairs to the ministers of the crown, I trust that as there are more new members in this than in any former parliament (a circumstance which of itself is certainly pleasing intelligence to the public), they at least will think it a duty they owe to their constituents to demand some further satisfaction upon the subject, before they give an unqualified assent to a project so new and unprecedented. There is something extremely peculiar in the mode of announcing the attempt in his Majesty's speech, which I certainly have a right to consider as the speech of the minister. The words, "manifested the intention," are vague and indefinite, and I could wish that, by some more express communication, they would attach to themselves a greater share of responsibility, for the measures in contemplation, than can result from the cautious terms in which his Majesty's speech is couched.

I wish to be informed whether they knew anything of what is passing in France, or whether any preparations have been making for such an attempt? I am sure if they are entirely ignorant of this, the secret-service money voted by parliament must have been grossly misapplied. If they have taken the alarm merely from the blustering speeches of French generals, or some threatening rhodomontade which has passed in their councils, it has certainly been most groundlessly conceived. Were an invasion to be attempted by the enemy, there is no man more sanguine than I am, in thinking that the issue of such an attempt would be highly honourable to the patriotism and the courage of the inhabitants of this country. Any doubt that it would have a contrary issue is, in my opinion, worthy of being treated only with contempt; and if the government of France can be at all influenced by the idea of receiving assistance from the people of England, they are unfit to conduct the affairs of a great nation. Such pitiful succour

as they would find in this island, if there are any individuals of character so depraved, and feelings so degenerate, as to join their standard, would, I am sure, rather impede than forward [their progress. I cannot boast of possessing that military ardour, that chivalry of patriotism which I have heard has been displayed at some meetings in the city, where a wish has been expressed that 300,000 or 400,000 Frenchmen might land here, merely to give them an opportunity of exercising their prowess in slaughtering them; but I have no doubt that ruin and confusion will be the fate of those who may be hardy enough to undertake such an enterprise. I agree with the right hon. gentlemen in all his statements of the necessity and propriety of adopting measures of prevention and defence, if the enemy's intention be such as to warrant them. I give this qualified assent to the measures which he proposes to adopt, because I profess to have no confidence whatever in the minister. Those who implicitly confide in his judgment and sincerity, will be disposed to give him credit for the necessity of the steps which he is about to take. Those who, with me, were witnesses of their conduct during the last parliament, have so often seen the present ministers raising alarms in the country when no danger existed, merely to enlarge their own power, and to frighten the people into a hasty concurrence with their unprincipled schemes of aggrandisement, that it cannot be surprising to them if I suspect their integrity on the present occasion. I do not ask precise information from them respecting the state of France, but I wish to know, whether they are advised that there are ships collected at the different ports of the French coast, apparently for no other purpose than that of being employed as instrumental in invading this country? If their alarm is taken up on no other foundation than the empty rhodomontade of speeches, all preparation to resist an attempt, which only exists in the distempered brain of a feverish orator, is absurd and ridiculous. The idea of invasion is by no means new. We have heard in this country of a project of invading France, and the march of our army to Paris was to consummate the triumphs of the first campaign of the war. This was not lightly talked of, it was gravely stated in the gravest of all assemblies,—a British house of commons, by no obscure person, but by a gentleman of great weight, and very nearly connected with the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt), and at the time

was much applauded by a majority of the house. One of the gentlemen who proposed this daring line of operation, in the enthusiasm of the idea, entered the army, got the command of a regiment, and thus manifested the sincerity of his intentions. But we never heard that the government of France had taken any steps to repel the threatened danger. I will not disguise my opinion that this note of preparation is founded for a purpose very different from that which has been this day professed. We have heard that the French armies have been completely defeated, and even annihilated in Germany; and except, like the frogs in the marsh, who were afraid of being attacked by the conquered bull, ministers suppose that the French, after being routed by the emperor, are to come over and attack us, it is difficult to reconcile their present alarm with their other representations. But supposing that the French really intend to make an invasion upon this country, what is the natural inference that they will draw from the resolutions which have been opened, and one of which has been proposed for the approbation of the committee? Do we not allow that the country is not at present prepared to repel any attack that may be made against it? In the last parliament, a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Secretary Dundas) triumphantly announced, and at the time expressed his desire that all Europe might hear it, but lest even the stentorian vigour of his lungs should not have carried the welcome intelligence to the ears of all the new members who now sit in the house, I shall re-state it,—“That with the naval and military force which the nation could then command, we had nothing to dread from the united efforts of the combined powers of Europe. Such was the unexampled strength of our navy, and such the courage and loyalty of our regular troops, aided by the zeal and intrepidity of a vast establishment of fencible and volunteer corps, that there was no possible danger to which we could be exposed, whether from our foreign or domestic enemies, that we might not encounter with the most confident assurance of success.” If the martial ardour then testified by volunteer associations, was not a mere spurt of loyalty, and if the persons who composed these corps had enrolled themselves not from motives of interest or from vanity, but from patriotism, or devotion to their country, why repose so little confidence in their exertions, or distrust their fidelity to a cause to which they are pledged by their honour as well as by their in-

terest? I am afraid that the resolutions now proposed, are calculated rather to invite than to prevent an invasion—that they tend to frighten this country, but not to frighten France. They proclaim to the enemy that till the new force which it is proposed to collect and to train is brought into action, that we are not in a proper state of defence, and thus point out the immediate time as the proper period for making a successful attempt. But I am persuaded, as I have already said, that the plan now in agitation points to a very different object from that which is professed; that it is in the contemplation of his Majesty's ministers to prolong the shocking and inhuman species of warfare, with a view of extending our possessions in the West Indies, and that it is for this purpose that parliament are called upon to sanction those measures which it is pretended are dictated by the imperious necessity of the times, and indispensably required for the safety and security of the country. I do not find myself called upon to oppose the resolutions; on the contrary, if they are necessary, let them be adopted by all means. I wish only to have some further explanation, and to be informed whether the danger of an invasion is such as to require these measures of prevention, or whether the real object of all the preparations is not the extension of our colonial possessions in the West Indies? Some of the expedients suggested by the right hon. gentleman, it was impossible to hear without a smile. We are called upon to raise a great cavalry force for a very curious reason, because the enemy cannot easily import cavalry into the country; as well, supposing them to attack us only with cavalry, might it be said, that we ought only to have infantry to oppose them. I have no objection to club for a horse, or to exercise in Hyde Park, and I dare say the right hon. gentlemen are very well acquainted with the maxim of ride and tie. I must confess, however, I cannot easily perceive the propriety of enlisting a corps of game-keepers, as if a game-keeper only had the heart to be a soldier. Besides, this class of men are by no means the most dexterous in the use of fire arms. The squires might with more propriety be selected. I am sure I know many gentlemen who are infinitely more expert shooters than their game-keepers. Neither am I fond of the posthumous *ex post facto* reflection which is thrown upon the deputy game-keepers. But, without at all entering into the detail of the intended operations, if the right hon. gentleman is really in posses-

sion of grounds of serious alarm, and if the present force of the country is insufficient to avert or to repel the danger, in the choice of difficulties I shall give my assent to the resolutions.

The resolution was put and carried.

NOVEMBER 1.

BILL FOR AUGMENTING THE MILITIA.

MR. SHERIDAN said he saw no reason why the bill should be continued not only during the whole of the war, but three months after its conclusion. It was probable that the war might still be protracted long after any alarm of invasion had ceased. This bill was only intended to secure the country from the dangers of invasion. He should therefore propose, that the bill should only continue in force two months after the meeting of the next session of parliament.

Mr. Pitt agreed that the space of three months was not absolutely necessary, and that a period of one month might be sufficient for every purpose of security. The amendment of one month was accordingly adopted.

On the clause allowing men with a certain number of children to act as substitutes,

Mr. Sheridan remarked, that in consequence of this clause, a man might be tempted to forsake the habits of sober honesty, to accept the bounty to serve as a substitute, and abandon his children to the care of the parish.

Mr. Sheridan asked, what was the operation of the bill? Were not the men liable to be called out and embodied in a state of imminent danger; and so long as the war continued, what security had they that they should not every moment be taken from their occupations, and separated from their families?

Mr. Pitt replied, and the clause passed.

Mr. Sheridan said, that he now came forward with a proposition, which he would state in as few words as possible. His object was to move an amendment in the bill, for the purpose of doing away with a distinction which he conceived to be odious and unjust. It was one of those distinctions, however, which he could wish to be done away with rather gradually and quietly than by any clamour of debate. The distinction to which he alluded was, excluding persons from a share in the defence of their country, in consequence of a difference of religious opinion. In the oath taken by those who served in the militia, they were

required to swear that they were Protestants. This, he remarked, was an exclusion of Roman Catholics, inconsistent with the liberality of the present age. It was more particularly inconsistent in a war carried on for the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic religion in France, and in the prosecution of which we had been so intimately connected with Roman Catholic allies. We ought to recollect how many individuals of that description there were in Ireland, whom it was the policy of ministers to conciliate. There could be no doubt that Roman Catholics would fight as bravely and zealously in defence of the present system as any other class of subjects. He remarked that the necessity of this oath would operate particularly hard on Roman Catholic gamekeepers; and concluded with moving as an amendment, that the words —“ I do swear that I am a Protestant should be struck out of the oath.”

The Speaker informed Mr. Sheridan, that it was then too late to introduce an amendment, as all the amendments had previously been gone through, but that he would have an opportunity on the third reading of the bill. The bill was ordered to be read a third time to-morrow, if then engrossed.

NOVEMBER 2.

INVASION.—AUGMENTATION OF THE FORCES.

The report of the cavalry bill was brought up, and the first part of it being read, General Tarleton and Mr. Fox entered into a review of the state of the country, and spoke with great warmth against the measures of the ministry. The hon. Dudley Ryder replied to Mr. Fox, whose speech, he stated, was such as might have composed a manifesto for a French general after invading Ireland.

MR. SHERIDAN reprobated the attack that had just been made on his right hon. friend. The hon. gentleman said, he has concluded the most extraordinary and most unprovoked libel I ever heard in this house, by protesting that he had felt himself invincibly called upon to utter every word that he had said. Whence or of what nature, whether political or fanatical, are the calls which so invincibly govern that hon. gentleman's conduct, I neither regard nor inquire; but this I am sure of, that no part of his speech, no part of his fury, no part of his pathos, no part of his invective was called for by any passage or sentiment in the speech of my right hon. friend. He says he has heard my right hon. friend's speech with surprise and regret. Sir, I have heard his with regret, but no surprise. I much regret at this crisis,

when we heard so much of the necessity of temper, moderation, and a spirit of unanimity, to find that there are men on whom all those qualities, when evinced by their oponents, are lost and thrown away. I much regret to find that there are such men and such tempers: that with them forbearance begets irritation, candour is repaid by cant, and moderation encourages insult. I appeal to the house whether or not the hon. gentleman's speech justifies this observation. I appeal to them whether any part of my right hon. friend's speech can justify the manner in which it has been attacked. Mark the malice and the bitterness of the hon. gentleman's insinuations. He is graciously pleased to admit, that he does not believe that we wish this country to be actually conquered by France. As one of the party to whom he has addressed himself, I bow with all possible gratitude for this instance of his candour; "but," says he, "their avowed hatred of the present administration is such, that I believe they would not be displeased with that sort of invasion that might throw a degree of disgrace on the present ministers." Good God! Sir, what motive does he assign us, and what object does he allot us? In contradiction to all our professions, in contradiction to all the manifestations of our actions, he boldly presumes that we are a set of selfish temporising traitors, who, without meaning to destroy, would wish the safety of the country to be endangered for the gratification of disgracing the present ministers! of bringing, he says, a degree of disgrace upon them! Upon whom? Upon ministers? Begrimed and black with infamy, defeated by their enemies, and degraded in the eyes of Europe already! we, it seems, wish an attack on our country for the purpose of bringing a degree of disgrace on those men, as if it were possible to aggravate the shame and indignity of the situation which they have brought on themselves. On the question of the defence of the country, we have abstained from reproaching them, and they repay us with insult. I, for one, expect no credit or applause from the partisans of these ministers, for the line we have pursued since the first serious intimation of the danger of an invasion; but, desirous as we have shown ourselves, however distrustful of the minister, to strengthen the executive government in case of emergency—let them not mistake our present forbearance—let them not misconstrue it as the slightest indication of a departure from a solemn resolution, to look to a day of national

justice on the authors of our present calamities, as the only hope of national salvation. Our intermediate moderation they may treat as they please; but it is trying our patience high indeed to hear those ministers, or their advocates, arraigning us as factious traitors, if we dare to utter a sentiment that may bring a degree of disgrace on their characters. It is too much, sir, that we should be insultingly accused of a crafty plot to disgrace men whose want of vigour in every enterprise, and whose want of faith in every engagement, have made their administration at this moment the hope of their enemies, and the fear of their allies. It is too much that such men should arrogantly hold their heads up in this house, where I view them only as arraigned culprits, whose trial is put off. That they should presume that we are as insensible to the injuries they have inflicted, as their own hardened hearts are insensible of remorse; that they should come here with frontless inhumanity, confessing and boasting that even now, at last, they have expended blood and treasure sufficient to sooth their pride, and palliate the concession of their adopting the advice of my right hon. friend, which, if originally adopted, would have saved every one of those lives, and every guinea of that treasure. It is too much to see such men covered equally with crime and shame, besmeared at once with blood and mire, erect their crests, and boldly demand support from the country because they have endangered it, and attempt to proscribe as factious traitors, those who have fruitlessly endeavoured to save it.

But, sir, the hon. gentleman has accounted for the animated—I will not call it the rancorous—manner in which he has spoken, by asserting my right hon. friend's speech displayed, at a time when moderation is so desirable, the greatest degree of party animosity. On this charge I confidently appeal to all who sit near the hon. gentleman. A speech of more temperate counsel, both in matter and manner, was never heard in this house. Where was the party animosity?—Yet let me retract:—I guess the animosity which the hon. gentleman attributes to such counsel. My right hon. friend's advice was to change the whole system of the Irish government; to govern there as he would govern here, on the principle of equal justice, truth, and plain dealing. This is the counsel given by my right hon. friend; this is the aggression of his speech; the

hon. gentleman is right to resent it ; as a friend to the present minister, he is right in considering any advice which is to take him from the profitable path in which he has trod, as the insidious counsel of party animosity. In corruption he has walked—in corruption he has thriven. However calamitous his career to his country and the people, nothing can have been more profitable to himself and his connections. The advice, therefore, that would tempt such a minister to return to the straight paths of truth and honour may, for ought I know, be plausibly imputed to party animosity. This is the only ground on which I can account for what would otherwise appear a spur of malice without a meaning. Mr. Sheridan adverted to Mr. Ryder's accusation of Mr. Fox for using inflammatory arguments with respect to Ireland, while he at the same time pleaded the danger of answering them. The hon. gentleman had represented the speech of his right hon. friend as containing matter for the manifesto of an invading general. This was at least a confession that the facts he alleged were true, since a general, on invading a country, would never enumerate to the inhabitants grievances which he knew did not exist, else he might be sure his manifesto would be treated with contempt. The best way of preventing a French general from putting inflammatory topics in his manifesto, would be to remove all cause of discontent. It could not be denied that those inflammatory topics, as they were called, were true. It would have been better to have shown Mr. Fox's assertions to be false, than to have traduced him for making them. Mr. Sheridan warned the minister of the dangerous conclusion he seemed inclined to countenance, that there was no discontent where there was no clamour. "There were those who felt and were silent, and those who felt so, were most to be feared." Mr. Sheridan concluded with a short review of the bill ; and though he was thankful for amendments, which he understood were to be adopted from some suggestions of his, yet he still considered it, "if meant as a measure of force, weak and inefficient ; if as a measure of revenue, partial and oppressive." He considered it as extremely objectionable, both in its principles and provisions ; and he could not but remark, it had been carried through all its stages by the finance minister, in the presence of the war minister, to whose department it certainly belonged, but who had sat as dumb a spectator of its progress as if he had nothing to do with it.

The house divided—ayes 140; noes 30. The report being brought up, and several clauses added, the bill, with the amendments, was ordered to be engrossed, and read a third time to-morrow, if then engrossed.

GAMEKEEPERS.

Mr. Pitt brought in a bill for enabling his Majesty to require the personal service of a body of men of the description therein mentioned, which was read a first time.

Mr. Sheridan said, he took it for granted that the bill just brought in was called the gamekeeper's bill. He trusted the chancellor of the exchequer would not press the second reading of it that night. He said he objected wholly to the principle of the bill, as being one totally unknown to the constitution of the country, and of the most dangerous tendency. He particularly wished country gentlemen to have an opportunity of looking into it; for his part, he should, in the strongest manner, oppose it, and should take the sense of the house upon it.

The second reading was deferred till the next day.

NOVEMBER 3.

GAMEKEEPERS.

The order of the day for the second reading of the act relative to gamekeepers being read, Mr. Pitt said that doubts had been entertained with regard to this measure, and as the gamekeepers, if enrolled, were not intended to be trained, there was no particular reason for pressing the measure forward. He therefore proposed the discussion should be postponed until after the recess: he then moved, "That instead of reading the bill now, it be read on the 25th of November."

MR. SHERIDAN said, if he agreed to this motion, it must be from a conviction that the minister would never think of this bill again. If he did not think the minister had been better advised upon this subject than he was when he brought it forward, and that the house should hear no more of it, he should have moved that this bill be read this day nine months. If the minister would be frank upon the subject, and confess his error upon the matter, he would say nothing upon it; else he should make his motion now. The house had lately heard a good deal about recognizances. If the right hon. gentleman would enter into a cognizance that the house should hear no more of the subject he should be satisfied; otherwise he must proceed to show that the bill was a stigma on the good sense of the house and the nation; a bill of such pernicious and foul principles, he was confident he should persuade the house, if not the minister, to reject with indigna-

tion. He had too much esteem for the good sense of the chancellor of the exchequer to believe he was the author of such a bill; somebody must have put into his hand, in the form of a bill, a bad translation of a German romance.

DECEMBER 14.

MR. FOX'S MOTION OF CENSURE ON MINISTERS FOR ADVANCING MONEY TO THE EMPEROR WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF PARLIAMENT.

Mr. Fox concluded a long and brilliant speech with the following motion:—
“*That his Majesty's ministers, having authorized and directed at different times, without the consent, and during the sitting of parliament, the issue of various sums of money for the service of his Imperial Majesty, and also for the service of the army under the Prince of Conde, have acted contrary to their duty, and to the trust reposed in them, and have thereby violated the constitutional privileges of this house.*”

MR. SHERIDAN said, after the manner in which this subject has been debated to-night, I feel it impossible to give a silent vote. To the hon. gentleman behind me (Colonel Gascoigne) I readily yielded precedence, and felt the indulgence usually given to a new speaker, and I carefully abstained from giving any interruption which might add embarrassment to the diffidence natural upon such an occasion. I must confess, however, the speech of that hon. gentleman was not a little singular. He reposed with the utmost confidence upon the truth of my right hon. friend's assertion, that the conduct of ministers, in the matter before the house, was neither consistent with the principles of the constitution, nor supported by precedents in parliament. Impressed with this belief, he had come down to the house determined to commit the absurdity which he had reprobated so much in the conduct of the common hall of the city of London; for, he says, he came down resolved upon the belief he had taken up upon his authority, to vote in favour of the proposition of my right hon. friend. Though, upon the statement of my right hon. friend, he assumed that the conduct of ministers was defended by no precedent, since he has heard the artful representation and the eloquent speech of the right hon. gentleman—for dextrous in point of management, and eloquent in point of manner, it must be admitted to have been—the hon. gentleman has discovered that the sending of money to the emperor, without the consent of parliament,

is a practice not only justified by example, but interwoven with the very spirit of the constitution ! It is, indeed, extraordinary that a member of parliament, whose duty it is to have some knowledge of the principles of the constitution and the usages of parliament, should confess he only knew the practice to be unconstitutional upon the assertion that it is unprecedented ; and again, that he should so suddenly take it for granted that it is perfectly justifiable without waiting for any reply to what he has heard in its defence. The hon. gentleman, too, in a tone which, in another speaker would be considered as harsh, censures the conduct of my hon. friend (Mr. Combe), for acting agreeably to the instructions of his constituents, and thinks he would have been ready to support any proposition which came from the same quarter. But, while he thus blames my right hon. friend with no small degree of asperity, and without much appearance of diffidence, he says with triumph, “ I, too, come here to speak the sense of my constituents as well as my own opinion.” When he came down, however, perfectly determined to support the proposition of my right hon. friend, how is he now so well acquainted with the sentiments of his constituents ? By what means did he contrive to turn so soon the sentiments of his constituents to tally with his change of opinion, and by what new constitutional telegraph has he contrived to procure such rapid information ? In truth, sir, I wish the hon. member joy of his conversion, and the minister joy of his convert.

But, to proceed to the real question which is the subject of consideration, before any new propositions are offered, since there are already before the house motions so very different from each other, as must necessarily embrace every variety of opinion. One hon. gentleman (Mr. Bragge), who moved the amendment, is determined to turn every expression of censure into a testimony of approbation. The hon. gentleman behind me (Mr. Nicholls) does not approve of the measures of ministers upon this occasion ; but he does not wish to shock the ears of the right hon. gentleman, who is so little pleased to hear his faults displayed, and to see his errors recorded with any bill of indemnity or any implication of censure. He wishes to have a bill enacting that a similar application of the vote of credit shall not in future be made. To this last proposal, I confess, I least of all can agree. I consider it to be a libel upon the constitution—a libel upon our ancestors—to

say it requires the provision of new acts of parliament to declare that the money which the house of commons voted for the purpose of defraying unforeseen charges, and answering a particular species of expenditure, should not be applied to purposes for which it obviously was not intended. The great argument which has converted so many gentlemen, and has had so great weight with the worthy magistrates—(who doubtless felt a just reluctance to condemn unheard, especially a minister to whom they owed so many jobs)—the great argument which has produced such distinguished conversions, and such speedy conviction, is this—that the measure at first deemed so reprehensible, is justified by precedent. It is, however, not a little extraordinary that while precedent so powerfully induces conviction, while it so totally changes the complexion of the measure, it is not to be permitted to pass as an additional corroboration of the practice, nor as an example for future imitation. With all these precedents to which they refer, and which they so readily admit, they do not venture to add the present. It is not to be drawn in precedent. In reality, while they admit the cases which have been urged in justification, they say that the present instance is so superlatively wicked, so scandalous, so dangerous, so fatal in its operation, that it must not be established. It is a stretch beyond all future example, which it is not proper to repeat; it is a rare and singular instance which future parliaments are not to sanction, nor future parliaments to practice.

With regard to the sense of the people collected at common halls, which has been treated so superciliously, I would ask when a meeting is regularly convened for a specific purpose, and their sentiments are properly expressed, why they should not be entitled to respect? The assertions of the worthy alderman (Curtis) that the common hall in the city of London was not regularly conducted, is an unfair reflection upon the chief magistrate, who, had he been a member of the house, would have very emphatically answered such a charge. But if the complaint of the worthy alderman proves anything, it proves that, in the city of London, such was the general disapprobation which the conduct of ministers has excited, that the result of the meeting was obvious; that he might have heard it from the first person he met in the street. I don't know, indeed, by whom the information of the probable result was given to the worthy alderman, whether by

his correspondent, Mr. Massinghi, or the communicative hair-dresser. As to the regularity in the calling of the meeting, I am informed that one person—whether properly or improperly, but certainly inconsistently with custom—had not indeed signed the requisition himself, but gave authority for that purpose. But to return to the real point before the house: I cannot help regarding it as a curious circumstance, that so many gentlemen appear to have come down predetermined to support the opinion they had originally adopted. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Bragge) seems to have had his mind previously made up, and his proposition previously arranged. He does not seem to have been aware that a great part of the sums sent abroad were remitted to the army of Conde, to which his motion does not at all refer. The amendment is wholly silent upon this part of the motion of my right hon. friend. What is this but an implied censure upon the transaction, so far as it relates to the Prince of Conde? If it rescues from censure that part which concerns the emperor, it leaves the other to stand upon the journals with the brand which is implied, from its being passed over without notice, while the other is held up to approbation. This disposal of the money is likewise stated by the right hon. gentleman to be a justifiable use of this vote of credit, though, in reality, part of the money was contained in the army extraordinaries, to which the defence does not apply. The point, indeed, is of the utmost importance, and the decision which the house shall pronounce upon its merit, is of equal consequence to maintain the dignity of its privileges and the respect of the constitution. My right hon. friend, in employing that copiousness of argument and the power of eloquence which belongs to him, felt the necessity of bringing forward every consideration that could induce the house, in circumstances like the present, to agree to any vote of censure. He entered into a detail, which, not the subject, but the dispositions of the house, demanded. Nor is it wonderful that the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) swerved so frequently from the point of the question, and endeavoured to fix the attention of the house upon what tended to mislead their judgment. With deference, however, to the example of my right hon. friend, I cannot help thinking that the real question lies within a narrow compass. It is the particular pride and the unrivalled glory of the British constitution, that its characters are so clear, so precise,

so intelligible, that it is impossible to transgress its spirit, and to violate its principles, without the crime being easily detected and the guilt clearly exposed. If there be any point upon which all declamation, all sophistry, all soaring flights of eloquence, all heroic professions of patriotism or disinterestedness, all calculated to dazzle or to amuse, are completely lost, it is upon a question like this. The proposition which my right hon. friend has moved consists of two parts, perfectly distinct. That part which we bring forward as a charge we are bound to prove; but when we have established the principles of the constitution, and alleged the facts by which they are violated, the *onus* lies upon the right hon. gentleman to show that the statement is fallacious, or to produce the circumstances of palliation by which the transgression is to be excused. In this view, therefore, we have to prove that certain sums are destined and appropriated to particular services. Here I will not examine whether the power of granting supplies and controlling their application be as ancient as the government itself, and coeval with the existence of the constitution. It is sufficient that I refer to the best times in which its principles were established, and in which they were defended, by the struggle of the people for freedom. This salutary regulation arose from the abuses of the government, from the misconduct of ministers, from the treachery of parliament, from tyranny, from corruption. The reign of Charles II. is a sufficient authority for the appeal to history. At the revolution it was solemnly recognised, and since that period it has been interwoven with our parliamentary usage. In this review I cannot but wonder at the stress which has been laid upon the precedents which have been quoted. It is arguing from the exception against the rule; it is erecting the deviation into the standard. But even these precedents, upon which so much stress has been laid, neither apply to the present case, nor justify the particular measure. Among the earliest precedents which have been quoted is that, in 1706, of the advance to the Duke of Savoy, to the amount £47,000. If gentlemen, however, will take the trouble to look into the journals they will find that this sum was granted during the recess of parliament—that not only was the ally of this country placed in perilous circumstances, but that Turin was actually in a state of siege. A demand was made for £50,000, and the letter which Mr. Secretary Harley sent in answer to the ambassador of

Savoy, will at once explain the principles of the constitution, and the inapplicability of the precedent. The letter states that, it is not practicable, according to the custom of the constitution, while parliament is not sitting, to comply with the request; yet, in the pressing circumstances of the case, her Majesty was willing to grant a certain sum to be deducted out of the subsidy that was paid to the Duke of Savoy. Will it then be said, that in circumstances like these, when there was a certainty that the money was employed in a manner to which parliament had consented, when it was to be deducted from a subsidy that had regularly been granted, will it be said that, either in the extent or in the principle, either in the circumstances or in its conduct, the present measure could be justified by an appeal to the authority of this precedent? This is the first of those four boasted precedents which have so readily convinced the right hon. gentleman of the propriety of the minister's conduct. The next precedent was in 1742. The money was then disposed of when parliament was not sitting, and it was afterwards moved in that house, that the sending sums to any foreign prince, without the consent of parliament, was a dangerous misapplication of the public money, and highly destructive of the constitution. On these words an amendment was moved, adding that the measure was unavoidable, and that it was necessary for the interests of the common cause. At that time, therefore, the measure was condemned, and the only justification set up was its indispensable necessity. If this necessity could now be proved by ministers, then we, said Mr. Sheridan, have no ground to stand on. The next precedent was the case of Holland, in 1617, when the money was taken out of the secret service money; and it is well known that, by Mr. Burke's bill, if the secretary of state makes oath the money was actually employed for the interest of the country, no farther inquiry can take place.

Such, then, are the precedents by which so much effect is produced, by which the jealousy of the privileges of the house is to be superseded, and on the credit of which every idea of atonement for our violated laws and constitution is to be given up. The right hon. gentleman says, that any farther precedent during times which we consider as the worst of times, and during a parliament which we have deemed so hostile to the liberties of the country, would be received with little respect. It is true

that the times of the last parliament, and the administration of the right hon. gentleman, I do not hold in the highest veneration. It is true that I do not think that parliament a meritorious parliament. What, however, must have been the opinion of the right hon. gentleman himself of that parliament, when, out of the alarmists who have seceded from our ranks, he has sent so many to shelter themselves from danger upon the higher ground, and to hide their heads in coronets from the form which they affected to dread? Surely, if the right hon. gentleman entertains so high an opinion of that parliament, he would not thus anxiously have removed so many of those who composed the part which merited the distinction with which he has thought proper to honour them. The right hon. gentleman wonders that, after having allowed the subject to pass over upon the first day on which it was brought forward, we should now so keenly make it the object of investigation. He seems to conceive us to be bound by the same rules which limit the country in the prosecution of a thief, where, unless the hue and cry be raised, the benefit of the prosecution is taken away. We have been called, ironically I suppose, a vigilant opposition; and, God knows, there is no reason to remind us that it is small. But I am ready to put in for my share of blame for want of vigilance, when the circumstance which is now erected into a precedent took place upon the communication of the intended loan to the emperor, by the king's message, in the year 1795. But even any negligence which might have been displayed upon that occasion is by no means of such a magnitude as our acquiescing in the present measure would imply. The situations were very different. Then there was a certainty that the advances to the emperor would be repaid, because they were to be deducted from the loan which was to be granted. In the present case, the circumstances are very different. The concealment which has taken place effectually precludes the house from remedying any negligence that had been committed, or repairing any mischief that has been produced. This, least of all, can be of any authority to the right hon. gentleman; and I defy any man to say, that the circumstances of the case will bear him out in the conclusion which he is desirous to establish.

The right hon. gentleman says, that he has taken larger votes of credit, in proportion to the general expense of the war, than

any former minister ; but, if he applies the funds which are destined for other objects towards expenses for which he ought particularly to have provided, of what importance is it, though it were true, that there are fewer extraordinaries ? We only ask, that he will not delude the country ; that he will not apply grants for prospective services to those which already have been incurred. If it was not to conceal entirely what was in his contemplation, why was it unfit that the house should be acquainted with the intention to take the Prince of Conde's corps into our pay ? He accepted bills before the vote of credit was granted, and had even begun to pay them. The house of commons was deceived by a false account, which stated, that £300,000 had been issued to the pay-master of the forces, while, in reality, it had been sent to pay the French troops we had taken into our service. If, wherever the words " vote of credit " occurred, according to the real intention of that sum, the house should substitute " provision for unforeseen expenses," the absurdity of applying it to services already incurred would be completely detected. What appearance would it have to continue this apparent inconsistency with the absurdity of the argument of the right hon. gentleman ? The right hon. gentleman says, that it would not have been equally effectual to have tried the experiment of a loan, and that this mode has succeeded. Here he enters into a high-sounding description of the splendid achievements of the Austrians ; extols their triumphs in a tone of as high exultation as if it were recording his own exploits, and praises their masterly retreat, which I am sure was not conducted with greater dexterity than that of the right hon. gentleman to-day. All this brilliant declamation is very fine, but it is nothing to the purpose. If the Austrians have achieved all this success, might not the same advantages have resulted from a more constitutional application of the public money ? I am ready to give the right hon. gentleman credit for the truth which he may occasionally communicate to the house ; and I believe he speaks correctly when he tells us, that last year, by the measures he adopted, he gave one chance for the safety of Europe. The real matter of congratulation then was, that the French, in their victorious career, had not the whole of Germany ; and the triumph of the right hon. gentleman concludes his panegyric with a quotation, which has no great application to the re-

lative situation of our allies at the present moment. The right hon. gentleman says, " Could parliament have judged of the propriety of the measure?" I answer " Yes;" and might have judged, too, upon the same grounds upon which ministers formed their judgment. The argument, that it was dangerous to make the measure public, because the sum granted might have appeared inadequate, is applicable to every vote of subsidy, to every vote of supply, to every measure of preparation, to the votes for the army and navy, and to every department of the government. If it might be attended with a slight degree of disadvantage to publish that information to the enemy, it was more than compensated by fairness, by straight-forwardness, and by manliness of conduct. Indeed the principle, on which this measure was defended, appears more dangerous than even any application of it can be thought impolitic. It arrogates to ministers a right to judge of the extent, as well as the mode of public expenditure; it is erecting the minister into an absolute dictator; it is more than mortal presumption; it is a pretension beyond humanity to claim; it is usurping the attributes of the Deity, the power of omniscience and infallibility, the power of refusing the desires and disappointing the wishes of those over whom they rule. Joined with the other part of the conduct of ministers, it, indeed, forms the subject of serious alarm. If they claim the right of landing foreign troops without consent of parliament, and of paying them by this delicate process, without application to this house, where is the security left for our liberties and for our constitution? One hon. gentleman thought he saw in the vote of credit, an intimation of sending money to the emperor? but if he saw it then, it must have been equally discernible to every gentleman in the kingdom, and thus the mischief arising from publicity must have been incurred. But, he would ask, upon what pretence could it be inferred from the vote of credit, that any part of it was destined to a different purpose from the vote of credit of the preceding year? When the minister had abandoned his first intention of raising a loan of £3,000,000 for the emperor, he conceived that he had also abandoned his purpose of remitting any money to the emperor without the sanction of parliament. It was evident that the minister did not wish to hang a German loan about the neck of the dissolving parliament, because he well knew it would hurt his friends in the event of

a new election ; it was understood that he meant to keep his motion for an early attempt on the maiden affections of the new parliament ; but why then did he not apply to this new parliament ? Instead of doing so, he has the audacity to say, “ I felt myself bound to keep my promise pledged to the emperor for farther remittances.” But was this a declaration fit to make to that house or the country, when the money was to be taken from the pockets of a British parliament ? And, was a vote of thanks now to be moved for what was deserving the most severe reprobation ? Mr. Sheridan considered this as a new process of smuggling money out of the kingdom ; as a fraud likewise on the subscribers to the new loan ; because it was not till after the subscription to the new loan, that it came out that there was a sum of £1,200,000 minus of the specie of this country. Mr. Sheridan concluded with observing, that there was only one point which he should notice, and that was the *argumentum ad hominem* which the right hon. gentleman used against his right hon. friend. But with what ill grace did this come from him, whose whole ministerial conduct had been one continued attack upon the liberties of his country ! Were it possible that his venerable and illustrious father could look down upon the three last years of his history, to see him sit to applaud his confidential friends in reviling the sacred institution of juries, and that one of the most illustrious pensioners of the crown had not even been rebuked for saying, “ that courts of justice were become nothing more than schools for sedition ;” to see him covering the whole face of the country with barracks and bastilles, without even submitting the expense of their erection as a question to parliament ; to see the whole country under military government, and the people placed under the subjection of the bayonet ; while, as if this were not sufficient, their mouths were shut up, and themselves prevented from meeting to consult on their grievances ; and proceeding in his climax of constitutional violence, wresting from them, one after another, all their rights, till he came at last to take out of the hands of the representatives the guardian disposal of their money ? When he recollected the means by which that right hon. gentleman came into power, the arts by which he had retained it, and the contempt with which he had treated the house of commons, and the disregard of its declared opinion which he had shown, how could it be thought

that he would resign himself to its judgment with that submission which the conclusion of his speech bespoke? No credit could be given to that idle rhodomontade, that unmeaning cant of resignation. Of all the ministers that ever directed the affairs of this country, the right hon. gentleman was the man who had employed in his administration the worst of means, and entailed upon his country the greatest of evils. If two motives could be assigned for his conduct; if it could be said on the one hand that he might be guided by views of power and sentiments of ambition, or by feelings of patriotism and virtue, he should not hesitate to ascribe the former to a minister whose whole life had marked the same total disregard for the one, as implicit devotion to the other.

An amendment was moved by Mr. Bragge, justifying the conduct of ministers on the plea of special necessity. The house divided on Mr. Fox's motion—ayes 81; noes 285. The amendment was then put and carried.

DECEMBER 16.

GENERAL FITZPATRICK'S MOTION RELATIVE TO GENERAL
LA FAYETTE, &c.

The following motion was made by General Fitzpatrick at the conclusion of a long speech abounding with eloquence and the most pathetic appeals to the feelings of the house—"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to represent to his Majesty, that it appears to this house that the detention of General La Fayette, Bureau de Pusy, and Latour Maubourgh, in the prison of his Majesty's ally, the Emperor of Germany, is highly injurious to his Imperial Majesty and to the common cause of the allies, and humbly to implore his Majesty to intercede in such manner as to his wisdom shall seem most proper for the deliverance of these unfortunate persons."

MR. SHERIDAN.—Sir, I rise with the utmost readiness and satisfaction to second the motion which has just been made. But I will not for a moment prevent you from stating the question to the house, nor will I risk the chance of weakening the impression made upon the understanding and feelings of the house, by adding anything to what has been so forcibly and eloquently advanced by my hon. friend, till I hear what can possibly be urged in opposition to that irresistible appeal which he has made to the justice and humanity of a British legislature.

Mr. Wilberforce moved as an amendment, that in the room of the words of the original motion be substituted the following:—"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty on the propriety of his Majesty's using his good offices with

his ally the Emperor of Germany, for the liberation of General La Fayette, and Messieurs Latour Maubourg, and Bureau de Pusy." The amendment being regularly proposed, and the question being put upon it,

Mr. Sheridan observed, that it was not his practice to obtrude himself upon the attention of the house, after a subject had been fully discussed by his friends, nor would he have troubled them now, since so little, and that little worse than nothing, had been advanced in opposition to the eloquent and pathetic speech of his hon. friend, had not they been brought into a situation of difficulty, in consequence of the amendment which had been proposed. The hon. gentleman, he believed, had suggested the amendment (at least he gave him credit for the motive) from a wish to render the motion more palatable to the house; and it certainly had met the entire approbation of one hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham), who had previously showed signs of being desirous to speak, but who had remained apparently quite at his ease since the amendment had been proposed. While he was congratulating himself, however, upon the acquisition of the influence, the authority, and, what was not the least consideration, of that hon. gentleman, he was concerned to find that it had made them lose the vote of a learned gentleman (the master of the rolls). [Here there was a cry of "No! No!"] He hoped, however, that the motion would not be got rid of by a quibble, but that they would come to a fair and intelligible issue; and that conceiving it, as they must, to be an affair in which it was disgraceful for our ally, the emperor, to act, and in which it was disgraceful for the government of Great Britain not to interfere, they would, in a bold and manly way, vote an address to his Majesty immediately, to use his influence with the court of Vienna in behalf of the unfortunate persons who were the subject of this evening's debate. An hon. gentleman asked, "if we were prepared to break off our alliance with the emperor if our intercessions failed of success?" In the first place, there was no reason to anticipate a failure before the attempt was made; and, in the next place, the failure of the attempt by no means implied the necessity of breaking off the alliance. With respect to the precedent of Mr. Asgill, which had been disputed, the objection was not well founded; for, though the application originated in the queen, it came immediately from the King of France. And, in the present instance, he was of opinion that it would be

infinitely to the honour of those admirable feelings which our own illustrious queen was well known to possess, were she voluntarily to interfere in behalf of those amiable, but unfortunate persons, who are now languishing in hopeless captivity in the dungeons of Olmutz. The gentlemen on the other side of the house seemed to triumph in the silence of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham); and the reason, he firmly believed, was this: that he might draw aside the mysterious veil from this cruel, barbarous, and vindictive proceedings, with that manly and generous indiscretion by which the house knew his character to be marked. When he rose first, his right hon. friend (Mr. Pitt) put him aside, intimating to him, "My nothing will be better than your something; my quibbles are better than your sophistry; and if I say nothing to the purpose, at least I will not betray any secret that ought to be concealed." In fact, Mr. Sheridan believed, that Mr. Wyndham's tongue was bound by the same cause as the emperor's hands; and the house knew pretty well who was the gaoler. As a friend to freedom, he would rejoice when General La Fayette recovered his liberty; and as an old friend of Mr. Wyndham, he would feel no small satisfaction when he recovered his speech. He was sure also that he would not find the house like the adder, which is deaf to the voice of the charmer. He really wished that some other gentleman in his Majesty's councils had come forward; he hoped, at least, that an amendment would be proposed, that the discussions should not be confined in future to one side of the house, excepting in cases of special necessity. The right hon. gentleman seemed to feel very acutely upon the subject; the house, however, would not give him credit for the reality of those feelings, when they recollected that three years ago he condemned the proceedings against La Fayette as worthy of the execration of mankind, if the facts alleged were true; and now he came forward, affecting still to doubt of their truth, not having taken any measure to ascertain whether they were real or fabulous. He had laid down a general principle about jurisprudence, which he endeavoured to apply to the case of La Fayette, as if that unfortunate person had been imprisoned for a criminal offence, and had not been a prisoner of war. He could see no other motive for the unprecedented rigour which had been employed against that exalted character, than that which was sug-

gested from his being a moderate and steady friend to liberty ; a motive which was not so likely to influence the ministers of any government in Europe, as the present ministers of his Britannic Majesty—ministers who, on all occasions, had shown themselves the enemies of every species of reform, the patrons of every abuse, and whose uniform system it had been to extinguish the spirit of liberty, both in this and in other countries. The right hon. gentleman argued, that we had no right to interfere ; and that if we did interfere, we were uncertain of success. With respect to the success likely to attend our interference, that could not be ascertained till an application was made. Besides, if it was a disgraceful affair, had we no interest in the character of the emperor ? Were we not engaged in a common cause with him, for the attainment of a common object. It was one of the charges recorded against Mr. Hastings, that he had suffered allies in India to commit an act which disgraced the British name. But why had he recourse to India ? Had not the right hon. gentleman compelled the King of Naples and the states of Genoa (*vide* Debrett's State Papers) to take a part against France ? He referred to his own authentic papers upon the subject. For the character of General La Fayette he had the highest veneration. He believed him to be a man of high and inflexible honour, and that he might vie with the brightest characters in the English history. To the spirit of a Hampden he united the loyalty of a Falkland. Had Louis XVI. not fallen a sacrifice to the fury of a mob rendered desperate by the abuses and corruptions of the old government, which had bred up the race of sanguinary monsters who perpetrated the atrocious act ; and had General La Fayette returned to Paris, upon the restoration of tranquillity, to get the reward of his conduct ; if the king had thrown him, his wife, and her daughters into a dungeon, there was not a humane man in Europe would not have said that he ill deserved to re-ascend his throne, and that he ought to have his crown torn from his head. Yet this was the conduct which the governments in Europe had pursued to those unfortunate persons, to their eternal shame and disgrace. What added to the cruelty of the punishment, was the helplessness of the victim. He was not in a situation, when he was taken, to be demanded back by the government of France : but, had those foul insinuations been true, by which his character was attempted

to be blackened in this country ; had he betrayed his trust, deceived his master ; and, finally, imbrued his hands in the blood of his sovereign, then he would have been reclaimed by the French government ; then the princes of Europe, trembling at the command of the directory, would have ordered the doors of his prison to be thrown open, and General La Fayette might even have been a member of that directory, with which they were now obliged to treat. If the court of Vienna was mean enough to take advantage of his helpless situation, Mr. Sheridan hoped that the French government, overlooking the past, would reclaim La Fayette and his fellow-sufferers, as French citizens. How well such conduct would suit the generosity and magnanimity of the French republic ! and what a contrast it would be of republican resentment to monarchical gratitude, that, from this atheistical government, we should learn the principle of the forgiveness of injuries, and lessons of eternal vengeance only from the regular Christian governments of kings !

Mr. Sheridan concluded by repeating an observation which he had made last year, and which appeared to be something like a paradox, namely, that there never was a country in which there was more private worth or more public depravity than in this ; and in expressing his firm conviction that, were the present question to be decided by private feeling, the minister would be left in a minority as small as the number of the speakers.

General Fitzpatrick having acquiesced in the amendment, the house divided thereon—ayes 50 ; noes 132. The question was therefore negatived.

DECEMBER 17.

On the 17th the following message was brought from his Majesty :—

“ GEORGE R.

“ His Majesty thinks proper to acquaint the house of commons, that he is at present engaged in concerting measures with his allies, in order to be fully prepared for the vigorous and effectual prosecution of the war, if the failure of his Majesty’s earnest endeavours to effect a general peace, on secure and honourable terms, should unfortunately render another campaign unavoidable : and his Majesty will not fail to take the first opportunity to communicate the result of these discussions to the house. In the interval his Majesty conceives, that it may be of the greatest importance to the common cause, that his Majesty should be enabled to continue such temporary advances for the service of the emperor as may be indispensably necessary, with a view to military operations being prosecuted with vigour and effect at an early period ; and his Majesty recommends it to the house

to consider of making such provision as may appear to them to be most expedient for this purpose.

"G. R."

On the 19th the message was taken into consideration, and Mr. Pitt moved the address—as usual, an echo of the message.

MR. SHERIDAN wished to ask the minister two questions—the one a matter of fact, the other a matter of opinion. Whether the whole amount of the money advanced to the emperor (excepting a small sum which was retained out of the last payment to his imperial Majesty) is not now due to this country? And while this sum is four millions and a half, and the emperor is applying for another loan, if that sum should be doubled, what security have we that any punctuality will be observed by the emperor in his future payments?

Mr. Sheridan again rose, and, after a short introduction, proposed the following amendment at the end of the address:—

"Your Majesty's faithful commons having thus manifested their determination to enable your Majesty to give such assistance to your Majesty's ally, the emperor, as may be indispensably necessary in the unfortunate event of an unfavourable issue to the present negotiations for peace, cannot omit this occasion of expressing their deep regret that your Majesty's ministers should, in recent instances, have *presumed* to issue similar assistances to the emperor *without* any previous application to parliament so to do; thereby acting, *as your Majesty's gracious message appears in a great measure to admit*, in defiance of the established practice, and in violation of the constitutional privileges of this house."

Negatived without a division.

The house then resolved itself into a committee of supply, when the following resolution was moved:—

"That a sum not exceeding £500,000 be given to his Majesty to be applied to the service of the emperor, to be issued at such times and in such a manner as his Majesty may see most proper."

Mr. Sheridan observed, the minister was powerful in speech, and seemed to have had a patent for putting words together; yet he had discretion enough to be silent on proper occasions, as was then the case with respect to one point. On a former night he had stated the necessity of concealing from the public the knowledge of the money sent to the continent; therefore, it was impossible that a fair account could have been given to the house. There were other gentlemen who stood in a situation of respon-

sibility, besides the minister, and he wished to hear from them some information on the subject. He wished to know accurately, whether any interest had been paid for the money already borrowed by the emperor; or whether deductions had been made for that purpose out of the instalments advanced to his Imperial Majesty? It was material that the house know this, or know whether the emperor would have sent the interest, provided no advances had been made from this country, in order that they might judge of his future punctuality. The British parliament must expect the punctuality of a merchant, and not depend on the gallantry of a hero, for the payment of these sums. He would, therefore, add, as an amendment to the resolution, "That £500,000 should be granted to the emperor when his engagements upon the last loan are fulfilled, or satisfactory reasons given for the failure."

Mr. Sheridan contended that the guarantee for the payment of the interest of the loan, and the sinking fund for the redemption of the principal, stood upon the same ground, and that the creditors of the emperor in each case look to the public as their guarantee. He doubted whether, without advancing fresh sums to the emperor, he could have paid the interest of the former sums borrowed, and thought this held out but poor encouragement to expect the repayment of the principal sums advanced. He wished to know also whether the *actions* of the emperor's Austrian dominions were deposited in the Bank of England as a security? Whether the £5000 monthly, or £60,000 annually, had been paid according to the treaty, and had been applied towards the buying up of the bonds at the market price, and for the purpose of a sinking fund for the redemption of the capital of the loan? In short, Mr. Sheridan insisted, that there was a failure on the emperor's side of every part of the treaty, and that the £500,000 now proposed to be advanced, was to enable him to fulfil his former engagement with the British public.

Mr. Sheridan wished to know whether ministers considered themselves authorised to take the Prince of Conde's army in British pay, and continuing such payments, without the previous consent and approbation of parliament? For this measure, he observed, was virtually the same as increasing the loan to the emperor.

Mr. Sheridan's amendment was put and negatived without a division. The original address was then voted.

DECEMBER 22.

BILL FOR THE BETTER SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE
POOR.

Mr. Pitt moved for leave to bring in this bill, observing at the same time, that there was no subject which more deserved the attention of the house, or which required a more careful and deliberate consideration.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he certainly agreed that there was no subject which was more deserving of the attention of the house, or which more demanded their most diligent and serious investigation. He hoped, however, that the right hon. gentleman would persevere in maturing his system, as he had taken the subject out of the hands of an hon. friend of his (Mr. Whitbread), who would have prosecuted it, if not with equal ability, yet with equal zeal, and, perhaps, with a greater degree of industry. He wished that the right hon. gentleman had at least entered into a short explanation of the particulars of the plan which he now proposed to bring forward. When he talked of the approbation given to the objects of the bill, he ought to have recollected that sanction had been given in a former parliament. He would, however, when the subject was brought forward in detail, pay it the closest attention, and he trusted that it would be attended with the utmost advantage to that class of the community for whose interests it was professedly brought forward.

Mr. Pitt denied having taken the measure out of the hands of Mr. Whitbread; on the contrary, the bill which he now proposed to be brought in was contrived on a much more enlarged scale, and which, when put in execution, would supersede the necessity of the other.

Mr. Sheridan reminded the right hon. gentleman that the bill which his hon. friend (Mr. Whitbread) moved for leave to bring in, referred not to a detached measure which he had in view, but was part of an extensive plan which he then had in agitation, if the house had permitted him to prosecute it.

FEBRUARY 27, 1797.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

In January, 1795, the directors of the Bank of England informed the chancellor of the exchequer, that it was their wish "that he would arrange his finances for the year in such a manner as not to depend on any farther assistance from them." These remonstrances were renewed in April and July following; and on

the 8th of October they sent a written paper to the minister, which concluded by stating, "the absolute necessity which they conceived to exist for diminishing the sum of their present advances to government, the last having been granted with great reluctance on their part, on his pressing solicitations." In an interview with the chancellor of the exchequer, which took place on the 23rd of the same month, on the loans to the emperor being mentioned, the governor assured Mr. Pitt, "that another loan of that sort would go far to ruin the country;" and on the 9th of February, 1797, the directors ordered the governor to inform the minister, "that under the present state of the bank's advances to government here, to agree with his request of making a farther advance of £1,500,000 as a loan to Ireland, would threaten ruin to the bank, and most probably bring the directors to shut up their doors." With this cause, another, springing out of the war, powerfully co-operated—this was, the dread of an invasion, which had induced the farmers and others, resident in the parts distant from the metropolis, to withdraw their money from the hands of those bankers with whom it was deposited. The run, therefore, commenced upon the country banks, and the demand for specie soon reached the metropolis. In this alarming state the ministry thought themselves compelled to interfere, and an order of the privy council was issued on the 26th of February, prohibiting the directors of the bank from "issuing any cash in payment till the sense of parliament could be taken on that subject, and the proper measures adopted thereupon for maintaining the means of circulation, and supporting the public and commercial credit of the kingdom at this important juncture." On the 27th the following message was delivered to the house of commons:—

"George R.

"His Majesty thinks it proper to communicate to the house of commons, without delay, the measure adopted to obviate the effects, which might be occasioned by the unusual demand of specie lately made, from different parts of the country, in the metropolis. The peculiar nature and exigency of the case appeared to require, in the first instance, the measure contained in the order of council which his Majesty has directed to be laid before the house. In recommending this important subject to the immediate and serious attention of the house of commons, his Majesty relies with the utmost confidence on the experienced wisdom and firmness of his parliament for taking such measures as may be best calculated to meet any temporary pressure, and to call forth, in the most effectual manner, the extensive resources of his kingdoms in support of their public and commercial credit, and in defence of their dearest interests.

"G. R."

Mr. Pitt moved, "That his Majesty's message be taken into consideration to-morrow."

MR. SHERIDAN rose, not to pursue the observations which had been made upon the present critical state of the country, but to express his surprise that the consideration of the order in council should be put off for a single day. In the first part of the order he found nothing but an opinion respecting the circumstances of the bank, as connected with the present state of public affairs;

the conclusion of it contained nothing less than a positive requisition of all the cash in the bank—a requisition which, however strange and unconstitutional, the bank directors thought themselves bound in duty to obey. The order certainly was of such a nature that the house had a right to expect some explanation on the subject. The conduct of the minister, however, had suggested to him a motion, upon which he would certainly take the sense of the house, and upon which they ought not to delay a single hour in expressing an opinion. He should endeavour to abstain from expressing those sentiments of indignation which every man must feel on this occasion. He could not, however, but remark, that the right hon. gentleman was now acting upon the same system of delusion which had characterised all his administration. He entertained no doubts about the solidity of the bank, and would rely more upon their own statement of their situation than any declaration of that house; nor did he object to the public pledging their security for the outstanding engagements of the bank; but he remonstrated strongly against the mode in which the business was brought before the legislature. What right had government to exercise a compulsory power over the Bank of England? The fair way would have been for the bank to have laid a statement of their situation before the house, to have described the causes to which their embarrassments were to be imputed, and to have prayed for that interference in their behalf, which he was sure the legislature, upon proper grounds, would have been ready to grant. Instead of this, an order of council had been issued putting the whole cash of the bank in requisition. And upon what pretence? To satisfy the necessary demands for the public service! What right had government to the cash of the bank more than to the cash of any individual in the kingdom? As well, and with full as much justice, might the right hon. gentleman have put in requisition the money of those wealthy placemen and pensioners who were planted around him. Nay, this would not have been so bad; for, in the present instance, by an act of compulsion upon the bank, he was obliging it to break faith with its creditors. And what were these public exigencies on account of which this strange and unprecedented measure was adopted? They must necessarily be such as the public paper securities could not satisfy. With respect to the appointment of a committee to inquire into the affairs of the bank,

it was notorious that a leak had sprung in the vessel, and it was pretty evident that it had been occasioned by the exportation of specie to foreign countries; as to the criminality of the pilot, that would be matter for future consideration. Taking that for granted, therefore, of which every one was perfectly convinced, that the immense exportation of specie was the cause of the present embarrassments, he should move, "That it is the opinion of this house that no farther exportation of specie or gold should take place for the use of the emperor, or any other foreign power, until the sense of parliament should have been taken on the subject, upon a full review of the causes of the present exigencies of the public." It might be said that, in a season of such great difficulties, it was not probable that the minister of the country would take a step which would add so much to their pressure. With regard to his professions, he had seen him so often abandon them that he no longer reposed any trust either in his representations or his promises. He now placed as little confidence in his discretion. After his boasting, but a few months ago, of the high state of public credit; after vaunting his address in filching so much money from the country without its being publicly known; and after bringing down the communication of this day, what confidence could he (Mr. Sheridan) place in his discretion? It was not enough for the house to leave him to be guided by the dictates of his prudence, for prudence they found, by dire experience, he did not possess; nor was it their duty to be satisfied by his professions, for they had witnessed his promises no sooner made than broken; they ought to say not only that he ought not, but that he dared not to do it. He (the chancellor of the exchequer) might plead that the faith of the country was pledged to the emperor; but was not the faith of the bank also pledged to its creditors? If the right hon. gentleman urged, that withholding supplies from the emperor would occasion great inconveniencies in carrying on the war, he would grant that this might be true; but of two evils they were to choose the least, and then he would ask if there was any man who thought that, were we to go on furnishing money to the imperial army, this country would find any compensation in their possible, or even probable successes, for the certain evils which it would thereby sustain? He concluded with repeating his determination to take the sense of the house upon his motion, and with express-

ing his opinion that, if it was negatived, the country would one day consider them as the accomplices of ministers in promoting its destruction.

Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas replied to Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan said, that the gentlemen on the other side, because they could not fairly meet, seemed determined not to understand his motion. In its nature it was perfectly distinct from the discussion of to-morrow. [Here Mr. Sheridan desired the concluding clause of the motion to be read.] To-morrow an inquiry was to be moved into the situation of the bank. His object was merely to pledge the house to inquire into the circumstances which rendered that measure necessary, before any remittances could be sent to the emperor. The discussion of to-morrow was not stated to be for any such inquiry, and therefore he wished ministers to be prevented from sending any money abroad till it was obtained. The right hon. secretary said, that the facts on which the inquiry into the circumstances of the bank were founded, were not at all connected with the remittances to the emperor, and that it was quite on the other side: this was something strange indeed. He had never heard, however, that there had been any remittances from the emperor to this country, if this was the meaning of its being quite on the other side, for the emperor had never even yet fulfilled the engagements which this country had guaranteed; or, perhaps, the right hon. secretary meant that the more money was sent abroad the more would remain at home. He was not a little surprised, too, to hear that the present motion should be construed to infer that no more money was to be sent to the emperor; strange, indeed, it was that the right hon. gentleman should not understand the difference between deferring and refusing payment, when they had come forward with a proclamation, by which the bank were authorized to refuse payment of their notes for a limited time. He therefore contended that it was fit that ministers, in the present circumstances, ought to be prevented from sending any money abroad, till parliament had fully investigated the causes from which the distress arose.

The house then divided—for the order of the day 247; against it 70; majority against Mr. Sheridan's motion 177.

MR. PITT'S POOR BILL.

Mr. Sheridan said, that he had paid great attention to the present bill, and he must say, that a worse bill he had never seen. Its principle was detestable. It was a libel on the rich, and a libel on the industry of the country. He wished with the hon. gentleman, Mr. Jolliffe, that the bill were entirely given up. He wished, if it was to be still kept up, that a day should be set aside for the discussion of it, that it might be thrown out at once, and he had no doubt but he should be able to convince some gentlemen that its principle was so foul that it could not be entertained by the house for a single moment.

The further consideration of the report of this bill was put off to a future day.

FEBRUARY 28.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

The order of the day for taking into consideration his Majesty's message being read, Mr. Pitt moved the address, which was carried. He then moved, "That a secret committee be appointed to ascertain the total account of the outstanding demands on the Bank of England, and likewise of the funds for discharging the same; and that they do also report their opinion of the necessity of providing for the conformation and continuance of the measures taken in pursuance of the minute of council on the 26th inst."

MR. SHERIDAN said, after the last speech of the chancellor of the exchequer, he had been extremely impatient to reply. He had been very ready, however, to give way to other gentlemen who wished to deliver their opinions, with the most of which he had been extremely pleased. He would have regretted, particularly, had he prevented the hon. gentleman opposite to him (Mr. Dent) from favouring the house with the observations they had just now heard. The hon. gentleman began with lamenting the scurrilous mode in which the debate had been conducted on both sides of the house, and by way of a lesson of politeness he added, that he believed the motive of one side was to keep in, whereas that of the other was to get into place. A very desirable object to be sure in the present state of public affairs! He farther told them, that they were engaged in a war against an enemy who denied the existence of a Being, and who acknowledged nothing either divine or human. The phraseology was very strange. Mr. Sheridan supposed, however, that he meant the French were a nation

of atheists. Supposing even they were, he by no means conceived this operated as an apology for the unexampled prodigality with which the war was conducted ; on the contrary, he believed an atheist might be shot at as little expense as a christian. After adverting to Mr. Dent's speech in a strain of pleasantry, Mr. Sheridan professed his satisfaction in agreeing with most of the observations of the gentleman to whom he had given way. There certainly was no moment in which the British house of commons had been more powerfully called upon to renounce all dependence on ministers, and to repose confidence in themselves, and he was happy to see this laudable independence manifesting itself in the speeches of this evening. In the last speech of the chancellor of the exchequer, upon which he meant to make a few remarks, the right hon. gentleman had availed himself of the speaker's indulgence, and of the forms of the house, by which the opener of a debate was permitted to conclude it. He had no doubt in making that speech he wished to conclude the debate ; it by no means followed, however, because he had spoken a second time the debate should be concluded. As gentlemen were allowed, however, in special circumstances, to speak twice in the course of one debate, he was aware the right hon. gentleman had not violated the rules of the house, for there was no person who would not agree that the circumstances on which he spoke were very particular, the more so, as he was left by his friends to have the sole conduct of his own defence. The speech, he owned, was a very strong one. It had been remarked that persons were sometimes deprived of their intellects by severe distress, and from the tenor of his argument, he was also led to conclude that the embarrassments of his situation had produced that effect upon the right hon. gentleman. In one part of his argument he advanced the absurd position, that were government to discharge all the debts they owed to the bank, as the payment would be made good in paper, it would not relieve that public body from the difficulties produced by their present want of cash. But was any man so ignorant as not to know the deficiency arose not merely from the positive want of cash, but from the comparative quantity of paper which they had issued, and the demands of which they had not cash enough to answer ? Of course, when this paper was returned to them, they would find themselves at liberty, with safety to themselves, to issue a greater proportion of their specie. For in-

stance, supposing the Bank of England to have issued ten millions in paper by way of loan, and to be possessed of one million in cash, as a sum sufficient to answer the demand, certainly if five millions of this loan were paid them, they might issue five hundred thousand pounds out of the million of specie, because the run upon their cash would, in that case, be diminished precisely half. The right hon. gentleman had alleged that the dividends on stock were always paid in notes. But were the notes the same before that they are now? Was not the question always put to the creditor, whether he would take his dividend in paper or in cash? And when it was put to his choice he took it in paper, because he might have had cash if he pleased. With respect to the effect of the measure upon the bank credit, it certainly had inflicted upon it a very severe stroke, and he saw only one way in which it could possibly recover it, which was by the bank coming forward and showing the country they had adopted the measure from compulsion. An hon. gentleman (Mr. Bastard) had urged, in very proper and becoming language, the necessity of cutting off everything superfluous; he was not of a sanguinary disposition, but when he saw a person presiding in one of the principal departments of public affairs, and ruining the country by his measures, he was at a loss to know what ought to be cut off first; but he was convinced some example ought to be made for the instruction of both the present and of future times. An hon. baronet (Sir William Pulteney) observed, that if the measure was repeated it would make but a bad joke. If it was a joke, it certainly was one at which the country was not much disposed to laugh; but if it was tolerated in this instance, he was afraid that these facetious measures would frequently occur. What then was to be done in order to prevent them from ever again recurring? An hon. gentleman (Mr. Hussey) had said that, to retrieve the credit of the bank, government had only to discharge the sums advanced them by the bank; but he would add, it was necessary also that government should pay all their creditors as well as the bank—they should pay the civil list—they should pay the half-pay officers, who were now almost starving—that they should pay their agents and their contractors. Mr. Sheridan conceived it was by no means a temporary expedient; but he foresaw that the bank never would be able afterwards to defray its outstanding engagements in cash: for how was it

possible they could, since they were about to issue a greater quantity of paper, and their cash was seized upon for the public service? The hon. baronet who advanced a contrary opinion, and who knew more about business than most gentlemen of equal property, had too much good sense not to acknowledge the error on which it was founded. Mr. Sheridan next reprobated the transaction as a step to associate the bankrupt government with the solvent bank; a partnership which, if the bank directors knew the interest of the concern under their direction, they ought to spurn, and to force the right hon. gentleman to withdraw his indorsements from their bills. But it was urged, the bank had temporary difficulties to encounter, and it behoved them to adopt some mode of granting relief to that important public body. The house of commons, however, knew nothing of this; no application had been made for the order in council; on the contrary, it appeared that this facetious council, instead of examining the directors of the bank, acted entirely upon the authority of the chancellor of the exchequer. Nay, what added to his surprise was, that not one of the bank directors who had seats in that house had ever come forward and expressed an opinion upon the subject. Some information was certainly necessary before the house sanctioned so novel and dangerous a measure. They had heard of the bank a short time ago lending two millions to government; and they had also heard of the dividends on bank stock increasing. Was it not material to be informed, therefore, how they had come to stop payment at a time when their affairs seemed to be going on so prosperously? Perhaps the directors might be to blame; he did not say it was so, but the house ought to be satisfied that it was not so. They were not even apprised whether it was the wish of the bank that the measure should be adopted. The chancellor of the exchequer said it was, but he took nothing upon his word, and therefore called upon some of the directors of the bank to come forward and say whether it was, or was not, at their desire the order in council had been issued. There was something unaccountable on the face of the business for the bank to announce its own solvency immediately after it had been ordered to stop payment; and if it was solvent, why was an order issued which would operate so much to the injury of their credit? For his own part, he did not approve of opening a committee to inquire into the affairs of

the bank, because he had the firmest confidence in its solidity, and such an inquiry might considerably hurt its credit ; but he deemed it highly expedient that a committee should be appointed to inquire into the grounds upon which the order in council had been issued. He was of opinion, at all events, the two inquiries ought not to be separated. An instruction, if necessary, might be given to the committee, to report upon the circumstances of the bank before it entered upon the other inquiry. But he did not perceive so much dispatch was requisite, because the proclamation, at present, had all the effect of a law, and a bill might be immediately passed as a matter of temporary accommodation, to enable the bank to issue small notes. So far, however, as he had made up his opinion, he disapproved of a committee to inquire into the circumstances of the bank, as such an inquiry might be productive of evil, and could not possibly do any good. For what was the result expected to be ? There was but one hope, and one opinion, that the bank would be found to be perfectly secure. Why then should the public guarantee their notes ? As well might the Master of the Mint indorse a guinea. But what was the nature of this guarantee which government so generously offered to the bank ? Government first lays hands on the cash of the bank. Next day government says, “ You cannot pay your notes.” “ No,” replies the bank, “ because you have taken away our cash.” “ Very well, then,” say government, “ You must stop payment till we examine into your affairs, form a partnership, and indorse your bills.” The bank might very justly answer, “ Give us back our cash, and we neither want your partnership nor your guarantee.” Had such a man as Sir John Barnard presided at the bank, he would have taken the order of council and thrown it in the face of the messenger, for in either case it was an affront upon that body. If they had cash, what right had the chancellor of the exchequer to seize upon it ; if they had none, it was an insult to pretend to prohibit them from issuing it. And what was the value of this guarantee, which government was so generous as to offer to the bank ? Had not government broken its faith with all its creditors, with the bank, with the Emperor of Germany, and with every individual who were in possession of its acceptances ? The solidity of the bank would be infinitely stronger, if it remained entirely unconnected with so discreditable a partner. Mr. Sheridan then suggested the

steps which, in his opinion, ought to be taken, if the difficulties really existed. Bank-notes ought to be made a legal tender to government, and government ought to be compelled to make every payment in bank-notes, except the dividends on the public stock, which ought to be paid in cash. He was unfriendly to a committee to inquire into the situation of the bank, but instead of opposing it, he would move an amendment, that these words be inserted into the original motion after "this house;" "and also to inquire into the causes which have produced this order in council, and the grounds of providing for the order in council, dated the 26th of February, providing for the confirmation and continuance of measures contained in said order."

The house divided upon the amendment—ayes 11; noes 244.

MARCH 1.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

Mr. Wilberforce Bird moved for leave to bring in a bill to suspend, for a time limited, the operations of two acts (prohibiting the issuing of any promissory note for less than twenty shillings, payable any otherwise than upon demand, &c.) as far as related to bankers not residing in the cities of London and Westminster, and the borough of Southwark.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he deplored the necessity to which we were now driven upon the subject of specie all over this kingdom. The remedy now proposed, he feared and believed to be absolutely necessary. It would undoubtedly be a great evil; yet, if omitted, a greater evil might ensue; and when two evils presented themselves to view, it was of course proper to choose the lesser; and, therefore, according to the idea he had upon the subject, not pretending to be thoroughly well acquainted with it, he thought that the remedy which was now proposed must be adopted. But he could not help saying a few words upon this matter, because it appeared to him to be of vast importance. The hon. gentleman said, that the manufacturers and bankers in the country were well known in the neighbourhood in which they live, and therefore there could be no inconvenience in this measure, with regard to the payment of the notes as they became due; but he thought the case was otherwise with regard to the capital, and therefore London, Westminster, and Southwark were to be omitted in the bills, according to the hon. gentleman's intention at present. That there might be great difficulty and

inconvenience in the extension of the bill, he had no doubt ; for, most unhappily for this country, there must be great difficulty and inconvenience in the whole progress, and in every branch of this subject ; but he did not know how it was possible to go on without making some provision, in this respect, for the capital as well as for the country ; and here he hardly knew what to say ; he was confounded when he looked at the probable consequences to which the measure which gave birth to these applications might lead. He knew not what provision was made, or could be made, for the payment of workmen, manufacturers, tradesmen or others, even for next Saturday night. He was sure, that if any measure was to be adopted upon the subject, not a moment ought to be lost. If a poor man was to be paid by a guinea note instead of a guinea, and no man would give him change for it without a discount of seven shillings, to what dreadful consequences might this not lead ? What would a poor man do with his fourteen shillings instead of his guinea ? What would the still poorer man do, whose whole weekly wages amounted to no more than fourteen shillings ? and, he believed, the average price of weekly labour was not higher. Indeed he apprehended the most dreadful consequence would soon ensue from these things ; nor did he know how the evil was to be averted. He mentioned these things, that every man in the house should instantly turn his thoughts to the subject. It would be dreadful, indeed, if these notes, instead of money, should become *asignats* ; and he feared it would be so.

Mr. Pitt thought the effects of the suspension might be beneficial to London, Westminster, and Southwark. He should therefore wish for leave to bring in the bill that it should be larger than the motion asked ; and therefore moved, as an amendment, " That the exception should be left out." This was assented to.

Mr. Fox moved—" That a committee be appointed to inquire into the causes which have produced the order of council." Mr. Pitt said, he objected to the appointment of a committee as now proposed, but not to the inquiry, or to its being conducted by the committee now appointed.

Mr. Sheridan said, that the mode of inquiry which the chancellor of the exchequer now proposed, was precisely that which was suggested by the amendment which he had moved, and which was rejected last night. The right hon. gentleman had asserted the dignity of the house with much warmth, and here he was permitted to retort upon him ; but his speech was so barren of argument, that it need only be repeated to appear ridiculous.

Mr. Sheridan admitted that the mode of appointing committees by ballot was a good one at first, but it was now become one of those good rules, and good practices, which are so often converted into masks of imposture and abuse. The right hon. gentleman affected to treat a public canvass for a committee as absurd and indecent. But he might have recollected, that he himself had recourse to that absurd and indecent mode of appointing a committee at a very critical period (the time of the regency). He would now ask him why, at that time, he gave into such absurdity, and induced the house to act in a manner so unbecoming its dignity? It was because at that time he knew the case to be delicate and nice, and that the country would not have been satisfied with a balloted committee, which they knew to be a jury packed by ministers, to serve the purposes which they had in view. The right hon. gentleman asked why they could object to a committee whose names they did not know? What would the right hon. gentleman say, if he should assert that their names were known, and that several members who had treasury lists put into their hands at the door of the house, went away in disgust? He could not be permitted, by the forms of the house, positively to say who would be on the list of the committee, but he should merely mention who, in his opinion, would be proper persons, and whose names, he would venture to predict, would appear on the list to be given in the course of an hour. If, however, that list agreed with his prediction, he presumed it would hardly be contended that he was such a prophet as to be able to tell the chances of a fair ballot. The names were very respectable, and it was necessary that they should be so, in order to give a colour to the business. Mr. Sheridan then read the names on his list as follows:—

Sir John Scott, a very respectable name.

Isaac Hawkins Browne, Esq., a very proper person.

Charles Bragge, Esq.; he will entertain the committee with critical remarks.

John William Anderson, Esq.

John Pane, Esq.

Thomas Grenville, Esq.

William Wilberforce, Esq.

Charles Grey, Esq.; very proper indeed.

Sir John Mitford.

William Hussey, Esq.

W. Wilberforce Bird, Esq.

William Plumer, Esq.

Thomas Powys, Esq.

John Blackburne, Esq.

Thomas Berney Bramston, Esq.

All very respectable gentlemen !

He must observe, however, that in this list ministers have not preserved the rules of proportion, for his side of the house were entitled to have five and a fraction. He did not charge the chancellor of the exchequer with making out the list himself. Here, said Mr. Sheridan, I see the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Dundas) smile, as if he would say, "No, my right hon. friend, in the innocence of his heart, never suspected such a thing; but there are plenty around perfectly competent to the task." With respect to the question itself, he was perfectly indifferent whether an inquiry was instituted or not, if another committee was not appointed. An hon. general had endeavoured to account for the secretary at war not signing the order of council; he believed that it proceeded from the reflections it contained against the alarmists; for he was so rooted an alarmist himself, that he was sure he could not believe that any of his tribe could act in a manner worthy of reprehension. He begged pardon of the house for being jocular on so grave a subject; but, even amidst the wreck of public credit, and on the brink of the country's ruin, it was impossible not to laugh at the juggling tricks and miserable shifts to which ministers had recourse to screen themselves from punishment.

The house divided—for the motion 67; against it 141.

Mr. Sheridan then moved—"That Mr. Fox be added to the committee on the affairs of the bank, &c."

The house divided—ayes 53; noes 144.

MARCH 3.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

A clause was brought up by Mr. Bird, which he was desirous should be inserted in the bill, viz.—"That if any person should fail in the payment of a note three days after it became due, that it should be lawful for the justices to summon him before them, to award costs to the plaintiff, with the payment of the

amount of the note, and to levy distress upon the effects of the person so failing in his engagement."

MR. SHERIDAN stated, this was as important a subject as could possibly engage the attention of the house in the present unfortunate situation of the country. One unfortunate consequence would follow from the issue of those bills, that if any should not be paid, a general distrust would take place with respect to their validity, and the whole would undergo a most alarming depreciation. At the same time it would be a most unfortunate thing to hold out to all the manufacturers in the kingdom, a menace of being imprisoned or sent to the house of correction, if, not from any fraudulent purpose, but from the failure of remittances or the pressure of the times, they should be unable to make good their engagement. If the bill was accompanied with such a menace, instead of having the effect to afford a temporary relief to their credit, it would tempt them rather to incur the evils of immediate bankruptcy, than run the risk of being subjected to a punishment so painful and degrading. At the same time, if these bills were to rest merely on nominal credit, they would not answer the purpose to afford relief to the laborious poor. If presented to the baker and butcher, they would not be accepted by them to their full amount, and this circumstance must also tend to create a general depreciation. He should therefore, propose, in order to remedy this evil, that the persons issuing those notes, as a security for their payment, should previously deposit property adequate to the amount of the notes issued, and that no individuals should be allowed to issue those notes, whose substance did not allow them to make this deposit. This precaution, he remarked, would remove every chance for fraud or depreciation, which must otherwise inevitably take place in the circulation of this paper. If manufacturers were in such a situation as to justify them in issuing those notes, they must either be on such a footing of credit with their banker, or in possession of good bills, which would enable them to produce security to the amount of the notes issued. He illustrated his proposition by referring to the instance of lottery tickets. The dealers in those tickets were allowed to divide them in small shares for the accommodation of their customers, after having deposited the original tickets as a security. He then gave notice of his intention to move that evening for an immediate supply of copper coinage,

in pennies and two-pennies, for the relief of the laborious poor. He should not move for any fresh coinage of halfpence, as, if these were of the proper standard, they must tend to cut out all those which were now in circulation; an evil which might be of greater magnitude than the relief it was intended to afford. He could not confide for a moment in the diligence of ministers; else, when they foresaw, as they must necessarily have done, the approach of this great public calamity, they would have taken measures to have had by this time waggon-loads of this useful coin coming up from Bolton's manufactory at Birmingham.

The clause, after some further discussion, went through the committee, in which a penalty that a magistrate might inflict was limited to the sum of twenty shillings: and being reported, it was added to the bill by way of rider.

Mr. Sheridan then moved, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to give directions that measures may be taken for procuring an immediate supply of such copper coinage as may be best adapted to the payment of the laborious poor in the present exigency."

Ordered.

THANKS TO ADMIRAL SIR JOHN JERVIS.

Mr. Dundas moved, "That the thanks of this house be given to Admiral Sir John Jervis, Knight of the most honourable order of the Bath, for his able and gallant conduct in the most brilliant and decisive victory obtained over the Spanish fleet, on the 14th day of February last, by the fleet under his command."

Mr. Keene did not consider this motion sufficient, and, therefore, moved in addition to it, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that his Majesty would be graciously pleased to confer some signal mark of his royal favour on Admiral Sir John Jervis, for his gallant and meritorious exertions on the 14th of February," &c.

Mr. Sheridan said, it is impossible but that every man must feel the sentiment that everything that can be done by this house, ought to be done in the present instance to express our high sense of the distinguished merit and eminent services of the gallant admiral. I differ, however, from the hon. mover of the resolution, who has stated, that for the sake of Sir John Jervis, he is, at all events, desirous that it should appear on the journals of this house. If the motion be put and opposed, to insert it on the journals of this house, instead of adding to the well-earned reputation of that brave officer, would, I conceive, have a contrary effect. The journals of this house do not contain the records of

that brave officer's glory. They would only bear testimony to the rejection of the motion. I cannot, however, submit to the doctrine, that this house have no right to interfere to express their marked approbation of a distinguished character, or to apply to his Majesty to signalize the most eminent public services by a peculiar mark of his royal favour. If there was any chance that the present motion would be passed unanimously, it would experience my warmest approbation. I cannot allow the proud boast of the right hon. gentleman to pass unnoticed, that in no instance has there appeared on the part of the executive government any degree of insensibility to the worth of gallant officers, or any want of promptitude to reward the claims of public services. The very mention of the name of the hon. admiral must forcibly recal the recollection of his former services, and the degree of attention which they experienced from the executive government. No mark of honour—no testimony of reward has hitherto followed from his gallant exertions, which ministers feel themselves compelled to notice in terms of the highest panegyric. While they have withheld from him and other illustrious characters, the just reward of their merit, on whom have they chosen to throw away their honours? On persons who have no pretensions to professional desert, who can exhibit no claims of public service. The late instances of individuals, on whom, for no reason whatever that could justify any addition of dignity in the eyes of the nation, the distinction of the peerage has been conferred, undoubtedly tend to cheapen the honour, and to take away from it all idea of reward for public services. If any honour could be conferred on the gallant admiral, in a way so marked as to separate it from the mass of honours which have been lavished on others, it would, undoubtedly, only be a just tribute for his distinguished services. I conceive that I am fully borne out by facts, when I aver, that honours have not lately been conferred in a manner agreeable to the public voice or the public wishes. I need only allude to the instance of a noble lord (Howe) who, by his gallant and able conduct had formed the strongest claims upon the gratitude and justice of his country. A blue riband was then vacant. It was pointed out for the noble lord by public expectation and public rumour. The noble lord could certainly feel no desire for such a distinction from any motive of personal vanity: but it was natural he should wish, for

the dignity of the service to which he belonged, that it should experience the most distinguished marks of the royal approbation. But, instead of the blue riband being given to the gallant and venerable admiral, he was offered a paltry bauble, which he properly rejected, while this signal honour, which ought only to be accorded to the highest merit, was jerked on the shoulders of a person, for what claims of public service, I confess, I know not, and I am disposed to think that the country must be equally at a loss to discover.

Mr. Keene, in compliance with the wish of a great majority in the house, withdrew his motion. Mr. Dundas's was carried nem. con.

MARCH 9.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

MR. SHERIDAN begged leave to offer a few observations upon the reports of the Committee of Secrecy, as they were materially connected with the business of the day, and afterwards suggest such a proposition as the nature of the circumstances seemed to require. The first measure which he thought necessary to adopt was, to endeavour to prevent the impression which the report of the Committee of Secrecy might have upon the public opinion respecting the situation of the bank, because, according to the report of the committee, the government was represented as a debtor to the bank in various sums, independent of eleven millions which the committee reckoned as forming so much of the capital stock of the bank, when, in fact, that sum of eleven millions was no debt at all; and a declaration of such a nature was entirely calculated to mislead. Instead of being included in the capital stock of the bank as a debt, it should have been reckoned, what it really is, an annuity of £350,000 per annum, that being the stipulated interest for the sum during a certain period of years. If the eleven millions were actually belonging to the effects of the bank, and available at any time, and for any purpose, that sum might be made applicable in any exigency to discharge any demand which might occur; but that could not be called a debt where there were no means of claiming the sum so reckoned. Government might pay off that sum if they were so inclined, it is true; but it was improbable that it would do so; nor was it at present very probable that government would

pay it off in 1814, that being the expiration of the eighteen years for which it was obtained, when it could retain the use of it for so small an interest as three per cent. There was no power in the bank to compel the payment of this money at any period, and the payment of it rested solely on the option of the government. The bank, as a corporation, was merely a vehicle for managing the national debt; and so long as the national debt existed, the bank would exist also; it would be a corporation to the end of time. He wished, indeed, it might not be so; but he repeated it would be a corporation to the end of time, if the national debt remained unpaid. So far, then, it was evident, that eleven millions did not form a part of the capital stock of the bank, but only gave it an annuity; and this was an instance, he would not say of the inaccuracy or deliberate intention of the committee to misrepresent, but of a statement, in consequence of which a sort of impression had gone abroad, as if that money were immediately applicable to any object of national relief. The inquiry then would be, of what effects the seventeen millions are composed which are to defray the outstanding engagements of the bank; they consist, of course, of cash in hand, of other disposable securities, and of bills which the bank has discounted. If part of the assets, then, consist in bills which have been discounted, the motion of his hon. friend (Mr. Tierney) was proper, in desiring to know the increase or decrease of those discounts; for if the bank were to continue to issue fresh discounts, whatever might have been the incredible distress of individuals, according to the hon. baronet (Sir Benjamin Hammet), after it had refused to pay its own notes, although he did not wish to give his opinion of the propriety of extending its discounts, he was obliged to say, that the distress of individuals was the only excuse for such a measure. He now came to examine the situation of the bank in respect to government. It appeared by the paper on the table, that government owed £9,964,000 to the bank, which remained as part of their assets, and the permanent securities for defraying the £13,770,000 of outstanding demands upon it. Now, what had been the conduct of government in this affair, but the most extraordinary that ever occurred? By parity of reasoning, let any gentleman take a supposable case of individuals acting in the same way, and see how it would stand. If a merchant, for instance, had assets in bonds, merchandize, discounts, and other

disposable commodities, to the value of £17,000, out of which he owed to various creditors £13,000, but had, on the per contra side of his accompt, £10,000 due to him by one man, which was within £3,000 of the extent of his engagements, would not that merchant think it very extraordinary conduct in that man if he said, "Sir, I understand that your affairs are in a ticklish way ; let me make an inquiry, and examine them ; and if, upon a strict examination, I discover that you have wherewithal in due time to extricate yourself from your difficulties, and discharge your debts, I will not say that I may not guarantee them for you." Yet, however extraordinary such a mode of proceeding might appear, such had actually been the mode of proceeding between the government and the bank. To go back to the comparison—the gentleman would say, " Why do you not pay me the money you owe me before you make such a request, and then I may be able to satisfy every demand without your interference?"—Such should have been the conduct of the directors of the bank upon the present occasion. He would not say, that the government had not been highly criminal ; and that the directors of the bank had not committed great errors. He might be blamed, at such a crisis, for speaking so plainly ; but plain dealing was now the only method to recover public credit. The next inquiry was, whether the bank had declined all at once, or suffered a gradual decrease ; and if the latter were the case, how happened it that the fatal effects which ensued were not foreseen, nor measures taken to prevent them. About four years ago the bank increased their dividend to seven per cent., which indicated a growing prosperity ; and granting that to be the case, could they have declined all at once ? Was the house and the public to imagine, when the bank undertook to subscribe one million last year towards the loyalty loan of eighteen millions, that they were then suffering a gradual decrease ? because if they were, how happened it that government did not take one measure to pay the debt, or any part of it, which it owed to the bank, to prevent the inconveniences which it has lately been subjected to, but on the contrary, took an additional sum of one million ? It appeared as if it had almost been the desire and plan of government to reduce the bank to such a situation ; and nothing short of infatuation on the part of the bank could have submitted to such conduct. If the present difficulties were foreseen, why did

the government shut the door when the books for the subscription of the loyalty loan of eighteen millions were open, and when people from every part of the kingdom came forward with their money, and were disappointed? Why, instead of closing the account at eighteen millions, did they not extend it to thirty millions, when they found they could raise the money with so little trouble and inconvenience? Did they fear, that by keeping the books open for the receipt of a larger sum than they had originally stated, they should depress the funds? Allowing that the minister did think so, ought he not to have deliberated a little, and have taken some millions more to pay the bank with a temporary depression of the funds, which would soon have rebounded to their usual standard, than have subjected mercantile men to so much distress and difficulty, by the narrowing of discounts, reducing the bank to such a deplorable situation, depressing the funds lower than he would have done at that time, and giving so severe a shock to public credit? If the minister did not know of the gradual decrease of the prosperity of the bank, and did not foresee these consequences, he stands excused; but then there will be much blame and error of judgment imputable to the bank. What then, it might be said, ought not the directors of the bank to lend assistance to the government, or to individuals, in cases of temporary difficulty, and on permanent securities? Undoubtedly, if they could do so, they ought; but let them first recollect that they are not the trustees of the public, nor of government funds, but the trustees of bank proprietors, of widows and of orphans; who, if they were blindly to go on in lending unlimited assistance, must eventually be ruined. Here, then, it might be asked, "What measures did government pursue to enable the bank to pay its outstanding engagements?" It would naturally be supposed that something was done besides the prohibition of paying in specie. It does not appear, however, that anything was done to avoid the measures which government adopted. Had not the bank the means to shun the calamity? Certainly they had, for their sufficiency has been declared. Did the bank call in any of the debts which were due to them? Did it narrow its discounts? or did it dispose of any of its disposable effects? One of these, if not all, would have been the plan of a merchant to retrieve himself in a similar situation; and yet not one of these measures did the bank adopt. Why did they not

sell the loyalty loan? If they had sold it, they might have sold it with a loss to themselves, 'tis true; but do not most men in embarrassed situations, if they dispose of their disposable effects with loss to satisfy their creditors, suffer the loss themselves? The bank trustees were bound to do justice to their creditors, to their trust, and to themselves; and it was extraordinary to see wise and just men, like them, brought to such a situation. Upon these grounds, therefore, he thought it his duty to give notice, that he should to-morrow move "that immediate steps be taken to pay the money advanced by the directors of the bank to government."

Mr. Pitt moved, "That the chairman be entrusted to move for leave to bring in a bill to conform and continue the order in council of the 26th of February, for a time to be limited."

Mr. Sheridan said, that if he had not known the minister pretty well, and that many of his adherents carried their system much farther than their leader, he should have been more astonished at the present plan than he was, even desperate as that plan was; for if the speeches of the noble lord (Hawkesbury) and the learned gentleman (solicitor-general) who had just spoken, had conveyed the sentiments of the minister, and if we were to follow them, then, indeed, there could be nothing so desperate as the situation to which we are reduced, in reasoning as well as in finance. According to one of those orators, a forced paper currency was better than specie, and our commerce will increase greatly, in proportion as we violate the principles of honesty in paying our public debts. He thought that paper was only a good thing while we had the means of converting it into cash; but the noble lord thought it not only a cleaner, neater, and more portable and convenient medium to represent property; but it was the very essence of wealth itself, even when it could not be converted into specie, and that the flourishing state of our commerce was the cause of this inability to produce specie to answer demands upon the Bank of England; why, really, until he heard such nonsense, he could not possibly have concluded that any such would have been uttered in that house. The chancellor of the exchequer, although he could not countenance, had given birth to this kind of reasoning; and he wished, for his convenience, he could carry it into practice. What a pleasant thing it would be to be able to show, from day to day, that the inabi-

lity of the government to discharge the demands that were made upon it, was owing to the enormous increase of its wealth! What an entertainment it would be to the chancellor of the exchequer, to sit in his office and to receive all collectors of the revenue in all its branches, of customs, excise, and all the other taxes of this country, who should tell him they had all been out, and had done their duty most diligently, but that the capital of every man on whom they intended to levy taxes, was so enormously increased that they were not any of them enabled to pay a single shilling! and yet such arguments from the collector of taxes could not be more absurd than the arguments that had been urged to-night. The evil which was now the subject of complaint, had been apprehended to arise from one of two causes; perhaps from both. The one was, that enormous sums of money had been sent abroad; the other, that men had been alarmed, and had locked up vast quantities of specie in their coffers; and for this evil, it was supposed, to issue an enormous quantity of paper would be a remedy. Those who thought so, he would venture to say, did not understand the nature of the evil.

The learned gentleman had entered into the nature of the constitution of the bank. He told gentlemen opposite to him that they were extremely ignorant of the nature of the constitution of the bank; he told them that they mistook the meaning of the act of the fifth of King William, and that that act did not constitute the charter of the bank for the private purposes of paying its creditors, but for the public purpose of assisting government; and that, if they did not answer this original and public purpose, the same power which created might also destroy them—a pretty good threat, and a little more intelligible than had ever before been given them. Now, that very *learned* gentleman who has accused others of being ignorant of the constitution of the bank, had not—he was convinced he had not—read one syllable of the constitution of the bank; for if he had, he could not have uttered such gross and palpable absurdities about it. The bank instituted to accommodate government! No such thing, nor anything like it. They lent the money to which the learned gentleman alluded, and which was now said to have accumulated to eleven millions, for a particular advantage which they had purchased by so lending; but so far was it from being considered at that time, that it was to be the duty of the bank to lend money to

government in future, whenever government might apply for it, or when government might want it, that the very act of parliament expressed an apprehension of evil effects from too great a facility in lending money from the bank to government, and therefore provided against it; and therefore the act expressed that no money should be advanced by the bank to government, except such sums as shall have been previously voted by parliament, and this was prohibited under a penalty of treble the sum advanced, to be forfeited by the directors who should so advance it; so that this act, by which their constitution was created, had it in view that the bank should never become what the present government, too successfully, had endeavoured to make them, the mere tools and engines of the king's ministers. And here it was impossible for him to abstain from adverting to the manner in which the provisions of this salutary act have been got rid of. This being the law of the land, the bank directors would be bound to observe it; but, at the commencement of the war, a bill was brought in to do away the effect of the act altogether; not, indeed, under that title, nor was there any notice of such intention, but a clause was smuggled into an act of parliament, avowedly brought in for another purpose, by which clause that provision in the act of King William, which prohibited the bank making any advances to government, upon any but sums expressly voted by parliament, was repealed. The directors had before that time advanced money to government against law, they were indemnified for that illegal act, and were enabled to do so hereafter, for that wholesome provision of the act of King William, by which they were forbidden to do it, was now repealed. That repeal was the cause of our present calamity. Immediately after this £1,500,000 was advanced by the bank to government, and was paid into the treasury; and now the house would consider how well the learned gentleman, who had accused others of ignorance of the original constitution of the Bank of England, himself understood that original constitution. But here again he must clear himself from any imputation of having said anything against the solvency of the bank. He blamed the bank for the servility with which they obeyed the illegal order in council. How far that order would hereafter prove to be wise was another question. He said nothing against the accommodation which the bank had given to the public; on the

contrary, he believed that their discounts had been of service to commerce at large. His observation was this—that if they knew their former discounts would not be good unless they continued to discount, the bills which they had already discounted could not be taken as assets in their hands to the full amount of such discounts; and therefore the committee was not justified in considering such bills as assets in the hands of the bank to their full amount. Gentlemen misunderstood him, for he did not mean to say the bank was insolvent; he only found fault with the manner in which this matter was stated. He did not blame the committee for this; it was a mere oversight for which they were excusable; no man would suppose that he should be eager to blame a report which was the unanimous opinion of a committee, when one of its members (Mr. Grey) was a person for whom he had so much esteem, and who, he knew, would never spare himself any trouble while he had a hope that his exertions would be serviceable to the public; but his duty demanded of him these observations; for this report, unless understood as he had stated it, would mislead the public as to the real assets in the hands of the bank.

With regard to the debt of £11,000,000 from government to the bank, the learned gentleman had made an enormous calculation of its value; he had stated it to be worth for sale near £16,000,000. It was no such thing, unless government chose to make them a present of it; it was only an annuity of £330,000 a year, no part of the capital of which could the bank be entitled to from government for sixteen years. In this interval they could have only £330,000 a year. There was also a statement in the report, which, if not looked into, would mislead the public. So far was there from being £11,000,000 as assets this day in the hands of the bank, it would not amount to £6,000,000; but this was only an observation on the mistaken description of the assets in the hands of the bank, in which the report described it to be £5,000,000, and the learned gentleman about £10,000,000 more than it was worth. This mistake of the committee arose from not specifying the nature of the debt from government to the bank; and the mistake of the learned gentleman arose from not recollecting, that, in this bank stock, four per cent. dividend had been added to the original three per cent. interest.

But it seemed, from the observations of the learned gentleman, that the holders of bank-notes are not the only creditors

of the public; there are others whose claims are of superior exigency—the army and the navy. That soldiers, coming from barracks where they can learn no sympathy with the public in any calamity, with arms in their hands, and who have to deal with a government whose system they know to be terror, should be duns, and pretty successful duns, he was ready to admit; but that their claims upon the Bank of England for specie was superior to the proprietors of stock, or the holders of bank paper, was a proposition which he begged leave to deny; nor did it appear that the bank thought so previous to the issuing of this order in council. He apprehended that the first duty of the bank was to keep faith with its own creditors, for that was the way for them to fulfil the trust that was reposed in them, and a deviation from which was a public breach of faith. But it seemed they were in no case to refuse to accommodate the public by aiding government. They had never done so; and if they should, they forfeited their charter. How stood that fact? Did they not actually refuse, in the year 1783, an instalment upon the loan, by which refusal stocks fell 14 or 15 per cent? but no man told them then, that for that refusal they should have their charter wrested out of their hands. The question was, whether the bank had not exceeded their duty upon this occasion; and that was a question which the house should have clearly stated before them on the face of the transaction, to form a clear judgment upon it. There was an assertion of the minister that this proceeding was necessary, but there was no evidence of that necessity; and how could the house proceed to give a legislative sanction to a measure, of the necessity of which there was no proof before them? It was stated, that if government were to pay the bank five millions to-morrow, it would not relieve them from the present pressure. Why not? Could they not purchase bullion with it? Really, this mode of stating difficulties he did not understand: but this was a system fraught with the most dreadful evils; it was of the same complexion as that which laid the foundation of the ruin of the French finances, and led to all the horrors which have been so much deplored in that country. The measure of the act in council, to stop the payment of the bank, was as violent as if it had been directed to any banker or private individual, to lay hold of the cash in his coffers, and rob him of it, under the pretence that it was in-

tended for the public use. The minister told us the committee had not reported enough upon this subject. He agreed with him—they had not ; there needed no ghost to come from the grave to tell us what we already knew ; and, certainly they had told nothing which we did not know already. But he did not see that ministers had laid before the house any ground for a bill ; what need had they of a bill, while it was notorious they would proceed without it, and as notorious that the bank would obey them ? If they acted illegally, he thought they ought to be left to their peril ; there was no reason why the house should aid them, since they did not condescend to give any proof of the necessity of their conduct. They had shown they could commit robbery, and, as they did not offer any evidence of the necessity of any one thing, why should the house give them leave to bring in a bill to indemnify themselves ? They ought, in his opinion, to be left to themselves, to go on in their own way, without the sanction of parliament. He warned the house of the effect of giving to ministers this facility of breaking the public faith ; it would only encourage them to treat all ideas of responsibility with contempt ; and there was no possibility of knowing where their desperation would end. He believed that we should not long be able, after the inundation of paper to which this system gave birth, to stop them from making bank-notes legal tender, and then adieu to the appearance of specie at the bank, and soon afterwards to the real value of the bank-note. These ideas pressed very much upon his mind ; but as he always wished to give way to the opinion of his right hon. friend (Mr. Fox), who thought it proper that leave should be given to bring in this bill, he should not divide the house upon the present question ; but in the stages of this proceeding he should have motions that should go with it *pari passu*.

The motion was carried without a division.

Mr. Sheridan then renewed the motion which he had made before, “ that the right hon. Charles James Fox be added to the committee.” He did it, he said, from the persuasion that his unparalleled talents, and established integrity, would point him out to all England as the man to whom an inquiry so important ought to be committed. He was sure that, if the bank themselves had the nomination, they would be eager to enrol his

name in the list, that they might give character and credit to the report.

The committee divided—ayes 60 ; noes 157.

MARCH 10.

PUBLIC DEBTS.

Mr. Pitt moved, " That it be referred to a secret committee to examine into the total amount of the public debt, with the interest due thereon, and all public charges, as they stood on the 5th of January, 1797 ; distinguishing what part arose since the year 1793, and the produce of the four years preceding ; and also the produce of the several taxes imposed for defraying the charges of each year within the several periods, and to report the same with their opinion thereon to the house. And likewise to examine into, and state the amount, of any unfunded debt outstanding on the 5th of January, 1797 ; and also to calculate the total amount of the expenses incurred for the year 1798, as far as they can be made up, and to state the same, as it shall appear to them and to the house, together with the provisions that have been made for defraying the same."

The motion was put and carried.

The chancellor of the exchequer then moved, " That the said committee be chosen by way of ballot."

Mr. SHERIDAN said, after what had already passed upon the subject of committees, he was surprised the minister should persevere in having a committee appointed by ballot. He hoped it was entirely unnecessary for him to say that neither himself, nor any of his hon. friends, intended to offer any disrespectful expression to any member of the last committee which was chosen by ballot ; no such thing was intended. But the fact that a ballot was the means of the minister packing his friends together to make a report upon his conduct, was too notorious to the whole country. A member had openly said the other day, when a list was put into his hand, " this is the house list." Everybody understood perfectly what was meant by that ; there was no possibility of explaining it away. This was the minister's practice to screen himself ; it was a breach of privilege of that house. That this was notorious would appear from a fact which happened in the course of the debate on a former night. Before the names of the committee were brought in and read to the house, he knew the members who would be chosen, for he read the whole list himself to the house, as a part of his speech, by way of anticipation of the result of the ballot ; and they were chosen exactly as he had read them. Was not this a notorious fact ?

It was recorded on the journals of the house. Why, really, after so notorious an instance of packing a committee, it is a little too barefaced to recur to the same means. He could, however, again repeat, that he meant no personal disrespect to any individual of the fifteen gentlemen who composed that committee; but he contended this was not a fair way of appointing them. He must, however, be permitted to say, they did not attend to the subject with the activity which might have been expected of them. They did not meet this morning; how could they discuss the whole of the subject which was now to be submitted to them, without taking into consideration the order in council which had so much conduced to bring about the situation which we are now in? And how could it, in the nature of things, be fair to send to them the consideration of that on which they had already given their judgment? Besides, many of the gentlemen who composed that committee were gone into the country. Such attempts as these to screen the minister were too gross and palpable, and the whole country had already seen through the artifice. The house, therefore, in defence of its own dignity, ought no longer to be a party to such tricking as this, but should proceed at once to choose a committee openly in the house.

An amendment being moved to insert the word "now,"—the question was put, "That the said committee be now chosen by ballot."

Mr. Dundas observed, "that he had heard it said, that in choosing a committee by open vote there was room for influence, and that choosing it by ballot was a cover for rascality." This observation was noticed by Mr. Courtenay.

Mr. Sheridan said, the right hon. gentleman's opinion of a ballot had struck him in the same way as it had done his hon. friend (Mr Courtenay), and he could not account for it in any other manner than as rising out of the late proceedings of the India House, where the right hon. gentleman had been beaten by two ballots, as he conjectured, for want of such a list as was made use of in the house of commons. In regard to the counter-list alluded to, he declared his ignorance of it; nor did he take the trouble which his hon. friend had done, of writing any list to throw into the glass, because he was aware he should not carry any member. He was not surprised at the speech of the right hon. gentleman, because there was no hypocrisy in his public character; he had no cant, but always displayed his political profligacy in a bold and honest manner. If a list, however, were

necessary, why did they not recommend the names openly ? They should recollect, the minister's recommendation was supposed to leave the house scarcely free in its choice ; that a ballot was therefore adopted, as the most impartial mode of proceeding to destroy that influence ; and then, under the mask and cover of a secret list, the minister found means to exercise the same influence in a more delusive and fraudulent manner. To show how this influence operated, he had only to state, that upon the last lists of names the highest number was 143, and the lowest 139, so there were only four gentlemen altered. The right hon. gentleman objected to the amendment, because the house was so thin, and said, would you propose lists now, when so many gentlemen are absent ? That is to say, in other words, he was for comparing notes quietly, as usual. But surely, if the house was competent to the business of referring the propositions to a committee, it was competent to the business of appointing that committee also. The right hon. gentleman had observed, that impurity might be imputed to any gentleman who spoke to his next neighbour about a committee ; and appeared very anxious not to be suspected of impurity himself. The right hon. gentleman, it was true, had got out of the cradle and nursery of politics ; had got away from school too ; had even gone through the political universities, and had since educated a number of young gentlemen in political learning ; so that he was not only a "scholar," but a "master of scholars." Indeed, the right hon. gentleman's innocence reminded him of a line in one of Dryden's plays, where King Arthur falls in love with the appearance of a beautiful young lady, and Merlin the enchanter, coming to remove the spell, exclaims—

"Behold the maiden modesty of Grimbald."

After this play of fancy, Mr. Sheridan proceeded in his argument against the ballot ; and alluding to the committee in the lords, which he introduced as a supposable case in point, reprobated the practice of forcing a man upon a committee appointed to scrutinize his own conduct. With such a committee, he said, whatever might be its report, it would fail in producing the effect intended.

Mr. Pitt called on the clerk to read the proceedings of the house on the 28th of April, 1782 ; which being read, it appeared that a committee, then sitting on the state of the finances of the country, had come to a resolution, that a secret

committee be appointed to inquire into the same, and that this secret committee be chosen by ballot; it was therefore evident, he said, that in cases similar to the present a secret committee was usually appointed, and that the mode of choosing it was by ballot.

Mr. Sheridan observed, there was a wide difference between the committee then appointed, and that which the house was now about to choose. The object of the committee alluded to, was to inquire into the conduct of the preceding administration; but the object now to be attained was an inquiry into the conduct of the administration now actually in power. It was, therefore, their interest to endeavour to pack a jury, by whom their own misconduct might be tried and judged.

The house divided on the amendment—ayes 40; noes 123.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

Mr. SHERIDAN said, that the order of council which required the bank to stop payment, had not produced that alarm which any man predicting such an event would have imagined. After all the lofty statements of the right hon. gentleman upon the flourishing state of the finances, after the documents by which he had attempted to support them, after the provisions for our expenses which it was said had been made, after the high-coloured contrast which had been drawn between the state of the enemy's finances and our own, and the arguments which had been employed by the right hon. gentleman to show the fatal consequences of a forced circulation, it could not have been credited that the order would have been attended with so little alarm, and received with so much submission. One great cause of this phenomenon, however, was that the commercial part of the country derived additional accommodation from the liberality of the bank in discounts. If, previous to this order, the country was impoverished by the war, to a degree that was not fully known, the prevalence of certain opinions upon this subject tended to conceal the reality of our situation. It was, no doubt, true, that individuals, possessed of actual property, might be embarrassed for specie, or what was now fashionably styled a circulating medium. Such may be the case of the bank—of the nation itself. This doctrine, however, had been pushed too far; like every other principle it was only true in the degree, and, when carried too far, produced the most mischievous consequences. The minister has laboured to bring the country to

think that the difficulties which they felt were a proof of their prosperity. If the order of council had not been issued, the aspect of affairs to-day, with respect to many individuals, would have been more gloomy than that which it now presents. The minister felt he was in a situation that, if he insisted on the bank doing its duty in discharging the just claims of their creditors, and limiting their discounts from the pressure which they felt for cash, numerous and important failures must have taken place throughout the country, and produced a general indisposition to the continuance of the war. On the other hand, he was aware, that if he made no effort to enable the bank to keep its faith with its creditors, but allowed the circumstances on which the order was founded to come to extremities, he might find a facility in affording a great temporary relief to the difficulties which were experienced. This fact no man could deny. He would ask that respectable class of men, bankers—of which there were many in the house—whether they had not themselves felt a great accommodation from the increased liberality of the bank in discounts; and whether it did not enable them to give the same accommodation to others? All men engaged in extensive transactions, whether manufactures, a theatre, or any other concern whatever, felt this to be true. This was the true cause of the little dissatisfaction which had been exhibited; but it was likewise a serious symptom of the danger of our situation. It was an opiate, which for a moment removed the sensation, but it increased the cause; it for a time silenced alarm, and lulled asleep apprehension. The house should be jealous, therefore, not only not to deceive the public, but not to deceive themselves; they ought not to be lulled into a false security, nor accept this temporary accommodation as a bribe, to reconcile them to the mischiefs with which it was pregnant. He would not assign any particular time for the duration of this order; but he was convinced, that if it continued only for one month, the situation of this country would be such as to admit of no relief. The breach which credit has sustained is one which will widen every hour, and which demands the most speedy and effectual remedy. If the evil had arisen from a scarcity of specie, it was in three ways—by an extraordinary drain, by the balance of exchange, or private hoards. He wished, above all things, the house to cast their eyes about, and see if they could devise any remedy which

might supersede the necessity of continuing the order of council by legislative authority. If we were to continue it, necessity would join with habit to reconcile mens' minds to it as a permanent system, and things would every hour turn worse, till the possibility of regaining our former stability—of re-establishing credit, was gone for ever. Our situation was either to be retrieved now, or the country was ruined past redemption. He did not consider it much to assume that a forced circulation of paper would infallibly lead to bankruptcy; for how could you stop when you had begun? With regard to notes being made a legal tender, no satisfaction had been obtained from ministers; and, indeed, if the system was once begun, how was it possible to avoid this measure? But, in pointing out the ruinous consequences to which such a system would tend, it might be answered, that the paper money of this country rests upon a different security from that of the French assignats or mandats, or any other species of paper money in that country; but to this he would reply, that if they both contained the idea of compulsion, this ingredient alone, amid any other differences, would produce a depreciation; and though not in the same rapid progress, the paper of this country would ultimately experience the fate of the French. When depreciation is begun, new issues are made in the same proportion, till absolute ruin ensues. This he was desirous to avoid, if possible, and therefore he was against any legislative authority for the order of council. The house has not yet understood that the measure was absolutely necessary for the bank. The order of council, indeed, might bear one thing and mean another. It was stated, however, that the measure was in consequence of public exigencies, and not because the bank was unable to meet the demands of its creditors. But, taking the order as it stood, the cause of making the requisition to the bank was for the public emergencies. In his opinion the committee in their report seem to have coincided. He had a right to assume, therefore, that it was for the purposes of government, not from the deficiency of the bank, that the order was issued. The house was called upon by legislative authority to declare, that they preferred the accommodation of government to the just claims of the public creditor. In this view he wished to withhold his assent from such a measure; for, if it was passed, he was afraid that the efforts to retrieve our affairs, to re-establish the

credit of the bank, would be greatly relaxed. He wished, even if the order were to continue, that the urgency of the motives to apply a remedy might still be felt; but it may be said, if the measure is illegal, why keep it up illegally when you may interpose legislative sanction? In the choice of difficulties, however, it was best to take the least; and, in his opinion, it was better to connive than to sanction. In other cases illegal orders had been issued by the privy council, which parliament had thought proper to overlook. But was the bank to be exposed to action upon their notes? This, certainly, was not a pleasant circumstance; but still the house ought to see that the bank was not blameable in having brought on this state of things. That the right to sue and recover from the bank was clear, could not be denied; but, everything considered, he must be an evil-minded subject who could employ such an expedient, nor did he think there was much danger of its being used. He should be troubling the house to little purpose if he did not suggest some remedy to the evils which he deprecated, and as a substitute to that which he disapproved. What he had to propose he conceived would be attended with effect; nor would it be attended with delay, as the right hon. gentleman had supposed. The perfect re-establishment of the bank was the great object which they ought to have in view; without this the country was undone. All the expedients which had been talked of about a new circulating medium were delusive. It was the nature of confidence, that when once forfeited, all claims to it were refused. General confidence was not founded on reasonings, but on experience. Men took a bank-note because they saw a bank-note paid yesterday, and knew that it had been paid for a century—not because there might be plausible arguments of security to justify their confidence. They proceeded, as the husbandman proceeds to provide everything which his agriculture requires—not upon a knowledge of the planetary system, but upon experience. It was experience of its being regularly paid that made men take a bank-note. Unless, therefore, that confidence was restored, unless you could again give currency to the saying, “as good as the bank,” no expedient would be crowned with success. The method of effecting this re-establishment was simple: it was by a fair avowal of the situation of the bank in all its details. They would then know whether the present crisis was produced by errors and faults;

and if errors and faults existed, they should be retracted and guarded against in future. It was of the utmost importance that it should appear that errors and faults had been committed by the bank in their connection with the minister. The sentiment of Demosthenes, so often quoted, was one which was particularly applicable to our present circumstances. If we were reduced to our present distress without error or misconduct, the state of the country was desperate and there was no chance of retrieving our affairs. It was the interest of the directors, that the public should know the true state of things. On the face of matters errors must have been committed. The modes which had been adopted to ascertain these points were not good, and he did not expect they would be productive of much advantage. But was it not important to know whether the bank had ever demanded from government the sums which it had advanced, and whether ministers had refused the claim? Was it not important to know whether the directors had remonstrated against any farther exports of specie, and the manner in which their representations were received! If they did act in this manner, then they escape the blame; but if they did not do what their duty required them to do, a cue might be found to discover that the state to which the bank has been reduced was owing to the misconduct of the directors. Above all, however, it was necessary to be explicit. The report of the committee had not stated anything more than the gross sums of the amount of the debts and funds of the bank; and however it might be known to some, acquainted with their affairs, in what their funds subsisted, there still prevailed a mystery as to the balance in their favour, whether the greater part of the four millions was in cash or otherwise. The report of the committee ought likewise to have explained, whether the order of council was adopted to accommodate the necessities of the bank, or in contemplation of the exigencies of government. If it was on account of government, then there was no reason at all for inquiring into the state of the bank; yet, when the right hon. gentleman must have been much better acquainted with it than the committee, he had made this the pretence of inquiry. When the right hon. gentleman, however, upon that report, stated that he had abandoned the idea of inflicting the guarantee of government upon the bank, the information was cheered from every part of the house. It was, nevertheless, very extraordinary that

the right hon. gentleman, knowing what he knew, could have stated, as a pretence of inquiry, the intention of this guarantee. After inquiring whether the directors had done their duty, it would be found, perhaps, that the embarrassments of the bank had arisen from a departure from the original object of their institution, and from too close a connection with the government. It was the more necessary to clear up and fix this point after the ideas upon this subject advanced by a learned gentleman (the solicitor-general). Till such doctrines were held out to be unfounded, the credit of the bank was irretrievable. It was necessary to guard against the effects of persuasion or of force, which might be employed by government at any future period. The bank had departed from their original institution, contrary to that clause in the act of King William, prohibiting them from ever owing more than the amount of what was owing to them by government—a provision which left no risk to those with whom they transacted business. The departure from this principle had been likewise a cause of the difficulties under which they had laboured, and his first proposal was to restore the original principle. Another clause in the fifth of King William provides, that the bank, under the penalty of forfeiting triple the amount, should not make any advances to government but on funds granted by parliament. This tied up their hands from too liberal advances, and continued with great advantage till within three years, when a clause to repeal it was thrust, by a side wind, into an exchequer loan bill, by which an indemnity was given for past advances and the control removed in future. Since that period the bank had made advances to government, which it could not have done had this provision existed. His second proposal, therefore, was to repeal the clause, and to re-establish the original prohibition. His third was, to enable the bank to avail themselves of the capital due to them by government, and to give them means of recovery. These were the three points which he intended to propose. If the present capital was not sufficient, the sum of eleven millions might be increased; and then, independent of the profits of their transactions, and the assets they possessed, as long as the country existed, the creditors of the bank would have security in their dealings. These were the proposals which he meant to submit, in the view of adding, likewise, that government should repay a part, at least, of the

advance which the bank had made ; for while the vicious practices he had exposed continued to prevail, no permanent advantages could be expected. It certainly was a natural question to ask, why government had not repaid some of the advances made by the bank ? Why did not the right hon. gentleman call upon the country to contribute their assistance upon so important an occasion ? After the vaunted spirit, the boasted resources of the nation, would it be impracticable to raise a sum of five or six millions, within a few days, for the great and important purpose of enabling the Bank of England to fulfil its engagement and retrieve its credit ? If there was no feeling of justice, of honour, of integrity, of patriotism to prompt exertions on such an occasion, it was all over with this country. No purpose of war, no necessity of public service, no demand for pecuniary aid to the Emperor of Germany could present a more forcible claim, or a more honourable cause of exertion. He did not think so ill of the country as to believe that the appeal could be resisted. If this were done the bank might continue its discounts fairly, and with its own substance. Now, however, when the house was discussing its solvency, was it right or proper that the bank should give an increased accommodation in the way of discount far beyond its former liberality ? It was very true, the debt due by government to the bank consisted of many articles, but it had been increasing greatly upon the head of exchequer bills. Instead of embarrassing the bank by the advances for which it was called upon, it would be far better to raise elsewhere the sums which the bank advanced on the securities it received ; and in this manner, at least, remove part of the pressure which the magnitude of the debt due by government had occasioned. The three first propositions he wished to be resolved in a committee of the whole house ; at present he should conclude with moving, “ That it appearing to this house that the effects of the bank, on the 25th of February last, amounted to £17,597,280, and that the outstanding demands on the bank amounted to £13,770,390 ; and it farther appearing, that there is owing to the bank by government, for advances made for the public service, the sum of £9,964,413 (exclusive of the permanent debt due from government of £11,686,800).”

Resolved, “ That it is highly expedient, as well for the honour of his Majesty’s government, as for the re-establishment of

public credit, that the speediest measures should be taken for the payment to the bank of the said advances, or a considerable part thereof."

Mr. Pitt having spoken in reply to Mr. Sheridan, and moved the previous question,

Mr. Sheridan said, that he should occupy the attention of the house but a very few minutes. The right hon. gentleman had conjured up in his mind a proposition which he had attributed to him, and to that proposition he had devoted an answer of half an hour. His answer would have been extremely good if such a proposition had been made; but nothing was farther from his mind than the idea that, because government repaid the advances of the bank, the public was to be deprived of the circulation of paper; so much the contrary, that he expressly said, to ease the bank of the load under which they groaned for the government, it would be the best way to enable them to increase their liberality to trade. Thus it appeared that the whole of the outstanding demands upon them amounted to £13,700,000. Of this sum they had advanced £10,000,000 to government. Relieve them from this, and surely they would be better able to assist the commerce of the country. His motion, however, was not, it seemed, so improper in itself as that he had timed it ill. What! was not the pressure of public calamity the time for public relief? When the bank was brought to a stand by the impolitic measures of government, surely it was the moment to pay them what we owed. Mr. Sheridan said, he saw that it was the intention of the right hon. gentleman to have a forced paper currency; he had given no answer to the question which he had asked, whether bank-notes were to be made a legal tender? It was in vain to contend against the torrent which had broke in on the country. We were doomed to all the horrors of a paper circulation, and that house tamely acquiesced in the desolation of all that was sacred in the kingdom. Already it was believed that between three and four millions more of paper had been issued since the stoppage of payment in money, and to what extent they might carry it, it was seemingly a matter of no importance to inquire.

The house then divided on the previous question—ayes 183; noes 45.

MARCH 13.

MR. HARRISON'S MOTION FOR THE REDUCTION OF USELESS PLACES.

Mr. Harrison moved, " That the extent of the supplies voted to government, since the commencement of the present war, having caused so heavy an increase of taxes, it is the duty of this house to inquire whether some relief to the burdens of the people, or provision for farther expense, may not be obtained by the reduction of useless places, sinecure offices, exorbitant fees, and other modes of retrenchment in the expenditure of the public money."

Mr. Pitt replied to Mr. Harrison, and moved the previous question.

MR. SHERIDAN said, it is not possible to add much by way of argument to the proposition which is now before you, because nothing can, in my apprehension, be more clearly the duty of the house than to inquire whether any relief may not be found to the people of this country by the abolition or retrenchment of sinecure places and pensions. Upon this proposition, however, clear as it is, the previous question has been moved and seconded; or, in other words, it has been moved that this is an untimely proposition, and that we were not at this moment in a situation in which such a proposition ought to be canvassed. With due respect to you, sir, I believe I only speak the general opinion of this house, when I say that you worthily fill that chair, and that it ought to be understood that you are the highest authority in this house; but when I state that you are the superior authority, I ought to correct my expression, at least in the opinion of one individual, for the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) who has just sat down, has told us that he is superior to you. He stands up and boldly avows that he has appointed a committee; the expression was a very remarkable one—he said, "when I appointed the committee." It was not a slip, for the very notice that was taken of it at the moment it was uttered, called on the right hon. gentleman to retract or qualify it, or to make some apology for having uttered it; but he did no such thing. I believe he disdained to make any apology. I should not have taken notice of the words if I considered them as a mere slip, but believing them to be no slip, I am bound to take them as the genuine sentiment of the right hon. gentleman. It is only one more specimen of his arrogance than we have witnessed before, and which he cannot deny. In my humble appre-

hension, the whole of the question will turn upon this very point, for the right hon. gentleman does not deny that there ought to be an inquiry into this subject; but his difficulty is, that he does not know what my hon. friend means to follow up with the pledge which he has proposed to the house by his motion, but he says he thinks the proper object of the motion will be attained by something which he has himself determined upon; for he says, that ever since he appointed the committee, he had a certain paper, which he intended to move as instructions to that committee, which will answer all the beneficial purposes for which the motion of my hon. friend is introduced. This shows us that he was sincere when he said he appointed a committee; and he spoke correctly, for he certainly did appoint that committee. But that is the very thing that I complain of, and wish to prevent the repetition of. I wish the motion of my hon. friend to be carried, and that it may be followed up by some measure that will prevent the minister from appointing another committee; for I do not want to refer any public measure to a committee appointed by him. I have heard it rumoured, that I am one of the members who are appointed by the minister upon a committee; to which, he says, he will refer the material part of my friend's motion. Now, without meaning the least personal disrespect to any of the members of that committee, I shall go into it with a perfect conviction that we shall make a report that will not in the least satisfy the minds of the public. I come now to the most material part of the minister's speech upon the subject which is now before us. The leading features of that speech tend to establish, as a principle, that corruption in public affairs is adapted to the very nature of our constitution, and that public business cannot be carried on without corruption. He has reminded us of Mr. Burke's bill, which was brought into this house in 1780, and carried into effect in 1782. That he calls a measure of confessed necessity, but he doubts whether the same necessity exist now, or rather, he denies it. No man doubted the necessity then, and who are they who deny it now? Who will compare the situation of this country in the year 1780 with its situation now, and say, that the necessity of retrenchment is not infinitely greater now than it was then? It is true the necessities of this country were thought to be great in the year 1780, and very great they were; but in the year 1780 the

Bank of England had not stopped payment. Will any man in his senses compare the two periods, and then tell me that there is not now a greater reason, on the face of things at least, for examination and retrenchment than there was then? The minister's proposition goes to this extent, that sinecures and places of great emolument ought to be held in this country; that to abolish them all would be injurious to the public. I believe that something of this kind, but in a limited degree, was admitted at the time when Mr. Burke's bill passed. But taking this doctrine to be correct, and I do not dispute it, will the minister, or will any of those who sit around him, deny that since the passing of Mr. Burke's bill, places of great emolument and patronage have been created? That fees, which were supposed to be abolished by that bill, have been renewed? Have they not revived that which stood in the very front of that bill as an object of final extinction, the office of third secretary of state? I say it has been proved, that some of the things which were intended to be lopped off by that bill have been revived. I say the minister himself holds some things which ought to be lopped off. Does he deny it? What will he say of the seminary which was established for young statesmen? Will he tell exactly what his own fees are? And will he maintain that they are absolutely necessary, and that none of them are received by him but for proper services rendered to the public? At the time when Mr. Burke's bill passed, it meant and intended that there should soon follow a regulation with respect to the forests and crown lands; but of them the minister did not say a single word to-night; although at the time I have so often mentioned, the great patronage and influence they created were held forth as things to be abolished. The minister may say, that there are many offices in the treasury, and other public departments, that are not over-paid. I verily believe there are; many of them I know to be very laborious ones, some of which I believe to be under-paid: but does that prove that there are none of them over-paid? Indeed, when any one tells me so, I feel the absurdity so much, that I can hardly return a grave answer to such an assertion. I will pledge myself to this house, and to this country, to show that all the waste and profligacy which attends places, pensions, and abuses of various public offices, is so great, as to be sufficient to maintain with bread all the labouring poor of this country. I do not speak

hastily and at random ; I have information to proceed upon, for I have been in a situation in which I had an opportunity of examining into these matters. I hold a paper that was put into my hand, that will tend to illustrate what I now say : it relates to a meritorious officer under the crown, an hon. gentleman who sits opposite me (Mr. Rose) ; he is secretary to the treasury, with a salary of £3,200 a year ; clerk of parliament, that is, clerk to the house of lords, £4,000 ; master of the pleas, with another large salary ; and several other offices, which make in all, upwards of £10,000 a year. I am not denying the merit of that hon. gentleman ; but when we are told that offices are paid on account of great and laborious duties, for God's sake let us understand the thing as it is ; let us ask, whether all these offices, for instance, are performed by that hon. gentleman ? and then let us ask ourselves, whether there is anything here that may with safety to the public be lopped off ? Suppose we turn our eyes to the situation of the right hon. gentleman himself (Mr. Pitt) ; I believe we shall find that he holds some that are not very laborious. Or if we take a view of the situation of a noble lord, a near connection of his (Lord Grenville), who for a short time filled that chair, he holds a great sinecure office which was given to him some time ago ; and whatever may be his merits, it is certain that he has not earned that sinecure by very long, or very laborious employment in the public service. These are only a few things which I refer to ; but there are instances after instances which might be given of offices held, for which long and laborious services cannot be pleaded. I shall not go through them, because I know the house would not have any pleasure in the recital : I only mention those few to show upon what foundation the minister rests his general assertion of the necessity of these things. The main question for this house to consider, and which they ought to consider attentively, is this : is there, or is there not, a general impression abroad that these things are severe grievances, and that by lopping many of them off the public may have considerable relief ? for I agree with the minister, that unless that be so, it is idle to have recourse to, and very blameable to hold out to the public, any hope of relief from such a source. The minister seems to be much afraid of deluding the public with too much hope from such a resource as this. I can tell him, that I know the public have great expectations upon

this subject; and if he sets about it properly, the public will not be deluded; for there is much to be done to relieve them in this way.

I do not look to the relief which the public will have, in a pecuniary sense, by the reduction of useless places merely, but I look also to the effect which that reduction will have; it will destroy that influence which has contributed so much to our undoing: had this been carried into execution before the commencement of the present war, we should not have had the hundred of millions added, that have been, to our national debt; we should not have had to mourn over the hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of our fellow-creatures, whose lives have been sacrificed to carry it on. Such, we see, has been the effect of this war; and the control over these useless places has been one of the most powerful means by which ministers, have been enabled to carry it on; and that is the point of view in which I considered these things as formidable and calamitous to this country. The minister talks of the expectation of the public, as if he was perfectly at ease upon the matter. Does he reflect upon the impression he has made upon the public mind by the bribery he has employed to gain votes in this house, in advising his Majesty to make so lavish a distribution of the peerage? There are no less than one hundred and sixty peers created since the commencement of the present administration. When we see the people suffering their burdens with such an admirable patience, have we no reason to apprehend that they will reflect on these things? and should we wonder if, at last, all which has been said upon the necessity of the war by those who have been so favoured, was only said by them to answer the purpose of their own aggrandizement? that they were only pursuing what they had in view all their life-time? This will impress on the people, that every public man who obtains rewards from the minister, only thinks of his own interest, without the least attention to public welfare. I have heard a member of this house say, that some persons were made peers who were not fitter for that honour than his groom; but, unfortunately for me, I cannot call upon that gentleman to verify that fact here, for he is now made a peer himself. I understand there is another batch of peers about to be created, and, from the names I have seen, no doubt that, while opulence is deemed to be one of the

requisites for that distinction, as I think it is, they may be very fit ; but when, session after session, this practice is followed to keep up influence, what are the public to think ? I am afraid their minds are made up upon the matter. Much reference has been had to-night to the labours of Mr. Burke. I have read many of his productions; among them, a work entitled “ Thoughts on a Regicide Peace.” Although I detest the principle on which that, as well as many others of that author’s works is founded, yet there is a sentiment in it which, I think, is founded in wisdom. After a beautiful metaphor, he says, “ That the gross mass of the people of every country will be directed and moved by the example of men of superior minds and superior authority.” This observation I wish the house to bear in mind. We cannot reasonably call on the mass of the people to bear their disasters with patience, but from the pure example of men of superior minds and superior authority. If ever there was a moment in which the higher classes ought to show their disinterested dispositions, and their love of the public good, unmixed with any wishes for their own advantage, it is the moment at which I am speaking. Instead of which, to the shame of government, and, in my opinion, to the shame of this house, there is a general principle cherished, which supports corruption to an unlimited extent. I hope the minister will reflect on these things, or, at least, that this house will reflect upon them. The minister has said, that he had in his contemplation to move instructions to the committee, which will answer all the beneficial purposes which are intended by this motion. It is a little remarkable, that we never heard of these instructions before ; and my hon. friend has given a pretty long notice of his intention to bring this subject forward.

Mr. Rose replied to Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan said, in explanation, that he did not mean to say anything harsh against the hon. gentleman who had just spoken. He was a man of great application and industry ; he had stated facts as he understood them to be ; but the hon. gentleman had not informed the house of the total amount of his income under government. He admitted that services ought to be well paid for, but he contended that large sums of money should not be given under the title of rewards for services, when, in fact, nothing was done for them. Now that gentleman

was clerk of the house of lords, for which he did nothing. The office was, indeed, a very laborious one, but it was performed by Cowper. He would now ask the hon. gentleman, whether he had not secured the reversion of that place to his own relation for no service whatever, while the gentleman who performs the duties of the office has nothing? With respect to the address of the house of lords, he understood that that address did not specify that hon. gentleman as a fit person to fill the office, although he had the good fortune to obtain it.

The house divided—for the previous question, 169; against it 77.

MARCH 22.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

A debate took place on the clause granting an indemnity to the bank.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) had asked if ever there had been an act of indemnity that did not go back to the first step on which it was founded, and it was true that such was the mode when the house approved the measure? but the propriety of the indemnity to the bank was not yet ascertained. To give an indemnity without examination, was to establish the principle that the bank were always justified in obeying an order of council, and were always to have an act of indemnity. Whether an indemnity was to be given to all bankers was a difficult question. No association could secure merchants and bankers against demands in specie from abroad. It was a degrading situation to which they were reduced; left to the mercy of those who were mischievous enough to press for payments in cash, while they had no means of making the payment. With regard to the liberality of the bank in discounts, he knew that those who held the propriety of the bank limiting its discounts, were represented as men who wished to cripple the commerce by withholding those accommodations which were necessary to its support. So far, however, was he from wishing to deprive commerce of any means of support and encouragement, that he thought the bank instituted for commercial purposes, and wished to see that connection between government and the bank dissolved, by which it had been prevented from fulfilling its proper purposes. He wished this divorce to take place, that

commerce might receive that share of attention and indulgence to which it was entitled, and that the bank might safely exercise that liberality of discount which was required. But if there were two customers, one of whom had obtained accommodation to the amount of ten millions, and the other three, how was it possible that the commercial advantages to be expected could be derived from the bank? Public meetings had been held, at which a respectable member of the house (Alderman Lushington) had presided, at which it had been resolved to apply to the chancellor of the exchequer to interpose his authority with the bank. From this it appeared, that the bank had been thought to be niggardly, and the success which these gentlemen had so soon experienced from their application, had naturally been imputed to the authority of the minister. He was glad to hear, however, what had been said by the two directors of the bank. Till the co-operation, not to say collusion, which had been manifested by the bank in all the transactions of government was abolished, the credit of the bank could never be restored. He was desirous to know if the arguments used by the chancellor of the exchequer were coupled with a promise to pay what was due by government? If not, the bank, by continuing to issue paper without limits, would soon be reduced to a state of absolute insolvency. Those who had access to any of the bank directors, well knew, and a noble friend of his (Lord Lauderdale), a person not apt to take up a fact upon slight grounds, had stated in his work upon the finances of the country, that ever since spring, 1796, remonstrances had been made to ministers against sending so much money out of the country, and stating that the ruin of the bank would be the inevitable consequences. He hoped this was true, for it would afford some prospect that, by better management, their affairs might be retrieved. He did not think that, there was any cause for haste in the present measure. Notwithstanding the intimation of the chancellor of the exchequer, when this business was first opened, that it was necessary to follow up the order of council by a legislative measure without delay, nearly a month had elapsed without anything being done; and if a judgment could be formed from the time it had been in preparation, there would be no end to the bill, should it be carried into effect. He would repeat, therefore, what he had said before, that it would be better to suspend the proceeding alto-

gether, than to hazard the evils which its enactment, without the prospect of a limitation, would produce.

The clause was carried without a division.

MARCH 24.

STOPPAGE OF CASH PAYMENTS AT THE BANK.

The house, in an adjourned committee on the bill for indemnifying the bank for suspending the payment of notes in specie, proceeded to read the residue of the clauses. On reading the exception contained in the clause for the purpose of securing the payment of the army and navy, a debate ensued.

MR. SHERIDAN considered the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer, as a direct confession of the establishment of a military government. What would the army say, when they heard the right hon. gentleman's arguments? They would say this,—“The chancellor of the exchequer has avowed that he dares not refuse us, because we have arms in our hands.” What was this but acknowledging that the country was under a despotic government? The soldiers would next insist upon the continuance of their allowance of bread; they would make fresh demands, and enforce them by coming down to the house with arms in their hands.

Sir Michael Le Fleming spoke to order. Mr. Sheridan, he conceived, had said, “that the soldiers would abide by a particular measure if they liked it, and if they did not they would come down to the house with arms in their hands.” This he considered as a libel upon the army.

Mr. Sheridan allowed that the worthy baronet was quite right in calling to order, but that unfortunately he had fixed upon the wrong person. The argument which he had been using, was to show that the minister had been making invidious distinctions between the people and the army, and that he thought so ill of the military as to suppose that they would insist on being paid in cash. The charge, therefore, against the right hon. gentleman was, that he had spoken of the army as wishing to be put on a different footing in point of payment from all the rest of the country. It was, therefore, on this ground, that he made sure of the worthy baronet's vote, for it was the chancellor who had pronounced a libel upon the army, not the person who had been called to order. To the question respecting the safety to be derived from the military, he should only reply, that there was but

one person in the country who would not be more safe without a military government. To the clause in question he wished to object, and to move that the treasury should have the power of drawing upon the bank for specie only, for the payment of the army and navy abroad.

Mr. Sheridan afterwards said that, he hoped the time was not far off when he should see the chancellor of the exchequer held up as the author of all the fatal calamities which have befallen the country, and made solely responsible for them. It was on this account that he had said, in a former part of this debate, he knew but of one man in the house who had occasion to wish to pay the army in cash, in order to ensure military protection.

The clause was carried without a division. The chairman next read the clause for fixing the duration of the restriction on the bank.

Mr. Sheridan could not agree, he said, with the hon. baronet, that the bank never could pay cash again; he thought, on the contrary, they might do so very well, and in much less time than that fixed by the chancellor of the exchequer. This was, on condition that government paid as large a portion of their debt to the bank, as he understood they meant to do, notwithstanding the taunting and scornful manner in which the right hon. gentleman had, some time since, treated that proposition when made by him. He made a fanciful allusion to the bank;—an elderly lady in the city, of great credit and long standing, who had lately made a *faux pas* which was not altogether inexcusable. She had unfortunately fallen into bad company, and contracted too great an intimacy and connection at the St. James's end of the town. The young gentleman, however, who had employed all his “arts of soft persuasion” to seduce this old lady, had so far shown his designs, that, by timely cutting and breaking off the connection, there might be hopes of the old gentlewoman once more regaining her credit and injured reputation. In order to facilitate this, he should support the amendment of his right hon. friend. On the same ground, he thought, as to the plan of the hon. baronet, that it would be better to put it off till the committee had made its report on the causes which gave rise to the order of council. He alluded to the remote causes; the proximate causes were very plain, and well-known. Government wanted money, and could not do without it; they knew there was money in the bank, and they

laid their hands upon it; the bank knew their power and dared not refuse it. In the same way, said he, if a highwayman met me on Bagshot Heath, put a pistol to my breast, and demanded my money,—the proximate cause is, that the highwayman wanted money, and had a pretty certain notion that there was a sum in my pocket. The proximate cause of the highwayman was clearly want of money; the proximate cause of my letting him take it from me is, that I feared he would take away my life if I denied him. The house were in possession, therefore, of the proximate cause; and the more distant ones we hope to be acquainted with soon. He hoped, therefore, the hon. baronet would postpone his plan till the committee had made their report on all the clauses relative to the order of council.

The clause was carried, and the report ordered to be received on the 27th.

MARCH 28.

GENERAL DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

Colonel Wood moved, “That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, beseeching him to be graciously pleased to direct his royal highness the commander-in-chief, the master-general of the ordnance, in conjunction with other able and experienced naval and military officers, on whose judgment and abilities his Majesty most relied, to take into their consideration the present state of the country, and to consult and determine upon any other measures of security.”

—MR. SHERIDAN said that, the question to be considered in the present motion, was, whether the general defence of the country was defective or not; and whether the duty of defending it was well performed? If it was to be contended that ministers would take care to see it performed, he certainly would not depend on them. They might have information sent them from various quarters as to the place the where enemy intended to land; or where where a set of jacobins might lie in wait in this country to join them on their landing; but, at the same time, they might be guilty of misconduct, while the commander-in-chief did his duty. He did not like to hear this motion opposed, on the ground that every necessary measure was already taken for the defence of the country; and that it would convey a reflection on the commander-in-chief. If such a motion had been made in the Irish house before the French came to Bantry Bay, the same answer would have been given: “What! can you for a moment doubt the abilities and vigilance of the commander-in-chief?” But,

so far was that country from having been in a state of defence, and so far from there being any force waiting from Monsieur Hoche (or Monster Hoche, according to the very liberal expression of the Irish chancellor), that the French remained several days in Bantry Bay. It was a fortunate event for Ireland, as well as for this country, that they did not land. They had been very near coming to a right anchorage; and if they had, they might have landed and proceeded to Cork immediately. After an instance of such deplorable neglect, the house ought not, upon the assertion of the minister, to conclude that this country was perfectly secure. There ought to have been a communication between the heads of the naval and military departments, in order that their joint efforts should be combined to protect the country; but it did not appear that any such communication had taken place. For these reasons he would support the motion.

Mr. Dundas moved an adjournment, which was carried.

MARCH 31.

ADVANCES TO THE EMPEROR.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he was extremely anxious to know when there was a probability of a report from the secret committee; because, if it was to be made soon, it would save him the trouble of moving for some information, which would be necessary, in the motion he intended to make upon the propriety of sending more money to the emperor. In the returns before the house, of the advances already made, there appeared the sum of £500,000, which had been ordered by parliament; and there also appeared an advance, since the stoppages at the bank, of £220,000, upon what appeared to him very strange security. There was, in the first place, the receipt of the agent, and the assurance of the imperial envoy, that it should be repaid out of any loan that might in future be advanced to the emperor. From this circumstance it appeared probable that another loan was in contemplation. He could not avoid making an observation upon the nature of the security: it was precisely the same as if a man had borrowed ten guineas, and, when asked for payment, replied, "If you will lend me twenty guineas more, I will pay you the ten." He hoped that the right hon. gentleman op-

posite to him would meet this question fully ; for he must have made up his mind upon the question, whether or no any farther advances were to be made to the emperor. If the right hon. gentleman would meet him fairly upon that point, he should bring forward his motion on Tuesday ; otherwise there were several papers which would be material for his motion. He therefore moved, "That there be laid before the house copies of the representations made to government by the directors of the Bank of England, with respect to the advances to the emperor since the 1st of January, 1795."

Mr. Pitt replied.

Mr. Sheridan said, that the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had answered his questions very fairly. He hoped, when the discussion came on, he should not then be told that the time was not fit ; but that it would be argued on its real merits.

Mr. Sheridan's motion was not persisted in.

APRIL 3.

ADVANCES FROM THE BANK TO GOVERNMENT.

MR. SHERIDAN moved, "That there be laid before the house a copy of all communications that have taken place between the directors of the Bank of England and the chancellor of the exchequer, upon the advances that have been made to government since the 1st of November, 1794, exclusive of the papers that have been laid before the house this day."

Agreed to.

APRIL 4.

ADVANCES TO THE EMPEROR.

MR. SHERIDAN rose, in pursuance of his notice, to call the attention of the house to the subject of making any farther advances to the emperor, and proceeded to the following effect:—

It is unnecessary for me to say anything upon the importance of the subject which stands for discussion this day : I must, however, observe that such discussion must be attended with some embarrassment : I have before me but a choice of difficulties ; for, as it is important that the discussion which I bring forward should take place as early as possible, so it is also desirable that the decision of the house should be grounded on

proper information. I believe there never was a subject brought before parliament which excited more anxiety in the public mind, or to which the nation looked with more impatience, than they do at this hour, for the decision of this house with respect to a future loan to the emperor. It is a point which, in my opinion, involves the question—whether they are to be saved or ruined? And it is to his Imperial Majesty himself highly important to know, as speedily as possible, and before he commences the most important campaign that was, perhaps, ever opened in Europe, what is the determination of this house upon the subject of sending money out of this country at this awful moment. It is essential for the people of this country to know what is to be taken from them, and essential for his Imperial Majesty to know upon what he is to rely. In discussing this momentous question, I am ready to admit that, whatever I may think of the necessity, or the prudence, of advances that have been already made by us to foreign powers, we should at all events keep good faith; and, therefore, it is highly important, indeed essential, to our welfare, that we consider duly before we encourage a hope in the emperor that he is to have any aid from us, in the future prosecution of this war. With this view of the subject, I moved for certain accounts, from which the house might collect information, and such as I took to be essential to the subject in discussion. To that motion there ought to have been made a return very different from that small scratch which is exhibited on the paper now before us, and which I took into my hand just as I came into the house. I was in hopes, when I made the motion yesterday, and I took pains to explain it to a right hon. gentleman before the rising of the house, that the whole of the information I wanted, and which my motion called for, would have been laid before the house to-day; but I understood there was much difficulty in complying with the whole request; and that great embarrassment would arise from that compliance, on account of many of the papers which I wanted being before a committee now engaged in an important inquiry, who could not deliver copies of them consistently with the secrecy which it is at present a part of their duty to observe. I determined not to press any farther now for these papers. Under these circumstances, I feel that I come forward under great disadvantages: the information upon which I must proceed is extremely imperfect. Had we the whole

before us, I should feel it my duty to call upon the house to declare, that no more money should be sent to the emperor : indeed, if the information were complete, I think the house would see, that sending any more money from this country, at this moment, would be out of the question. What I chiefly wish for, and what I lament is not before us, is the whole of the correspondence between the chancellor of the exchequer and the bank directors, since the year 1794, upon the subject of sending money to the emperor. If the right hon. gentleman wishes to come to a free discussion of the question,—whether it be essential to the true interests of this country that farther advances should be made to the emperor at this moment, under all the circumstances by which we are surrounded, whatever may have been the opinion of the bank directors, and without entering into any calculations that have been made by them respecting the trade and commerce of this country,—I shall be ready to argue the subject with him in that way ; and I shall not desire the opinion of the bank directors. I think the subject may be now discussed without their opinions, as far as the motion with which I shall conclude will call for that discussion. Had I waited, I might have had the whole of the opinions which have been given from time to time by the bank directors, upon the subject of advances to the chancellor of the exchequer ; but I did not see the absolute necessity for doing so. Some may say, it is premature to inquire into the question of prudence in advancing more money to the emperor, before we have had a complete investigation of the causes which led to the order in council, by which the bank were directed to stop payment. That appears to me to be very unwise counsel ; for by it you may be led to defer the remedy until it is too late. It may be said, that you should not apply your remedy until you know the cause of the disorder ; that, I own, is, figuratively, very correct ; but if you attempt to carry it into practice, it may be fatal to the patient. If a physician were to order that neither a bandage nor a styptic should be applied to a bleeding wound until he had discovered the cause of the complaint, his patient would stand in danger of dying before the remedy could be applied by this deliberate and methodical physician ; or, if the Humane Society were to order that no person should be attempted to be brought to active life, from a state of suspended animation, until the coroner's inquest had sat upon the body, and

brought in their verdict, “Felo de se—death by the visitation of Providence—accidental death—or murder by some persons unknown,”—I apprehend their efforts would not be very useful. Here we are, I admit it, in a state of suspended animation; or, if we are assassinated, it is by persons who are much too well known. Having made these preliminary observations, I shall now proceed upon the more immediate points of the subject which it is the business of the house to investigate this day.

A worthy baronet (Sir William Pulteney) has given his opinion upon part of this subject before. I have already said, that I differed from that opinion. It is not necessary now to recite that opinion, nor to enter at large into that which constitutes the difference between us. I hope that public credit will be revived, and that in the person of the Bank of England. I am also confident, that whether you endeavour to establish a bank upon the faith of the landed property of this country, or whether you try any other means, that no such attempts should be made until you are entirely satisfied that public credit cannot be restored in the person of the Bank of England.

From what I have heard abroad, and from the two papers which have been laid upon the table this day, I am glad to see that the bank appears to have made such a stand against the measures which have led to this effect. I have, from the commencement, declared openly and freely what I thought of the conduct of the bank. Upon the face of things, they certainly appear to have been guilty of errors and some degree of criminality. It is, therefore, I say, with much satisfaction, I perceive from the papers on your table, that they are less to blame than I at first surmised. This will afford subject-matter for joy to the country at large; because, in addition to their being a corporate body, for purposes more immediately relating to themselves, the bank are the channel through which the public creditor is paid. It would, therefore, sir, unless it could be proved that they had done something to forfeit their charter—it would, therefore, I repeat it, be rash and improper to deprive them of that channel, or to make them no longer the medium through which the public creditor was to be paid. With respect to the bank in the present instance, it does appear, that not at a late period only, not at a time immediately preceding the order of council, but that from the end of the year 1794, they have been unceas-

ing in their representations to the minister, whose obstinate perseverance has brought the country to its present calamitous situation, and who was repeatedly pressing the bank for advances, which he incessantly promised to repay, but which promise he never kept. If, sir, it shall appear by these papers that the bank frequently remonstrated against the measure of making the treasury bills payable at the bank; if it shall appear that, not once or twice, but that they had nine distinct promises from him to abstain from that practice; if it shall appear that the right hon. gentleman promised to bring down the advances of the bank from £2,500,000 to £500,000, as requested by the bank; if it shall appear that he almost gave a pledge to bind himself, by a parliamentary measure, to make this reduction; if it shall be seen that he never kept any of these promises; if it shall appear that, notwithstanding these violations of the most solemn engagements, the bank, with a too-blamable facility, continued to afford supplies to him upon representations which amounted to intimidation—I say, sir, if these things shall appear, if the house shall find that the bank continued their remonstrances until the very eve of issuing the order of council, which they did not solicit, and which they did not want for their own affairs, I shall think, however culpable the directors of the bank may be, from their too great facility, yet, that they stand clear of much of the blame which, in the first instance, we might be inclined to attach to them, and which, in a very superior degree, is imputable to the right hon. gentleman. The papers that have been laid upon the table afford us some light into this part of the subject. Let us have recourse to some of the documents upon this subject—I say some of them, because they are not all before us.

On the 3rd of December, 1795, the court of directors of the bank came to the following resolution, which was communicated to the minister:—

“ Resolved, That the following resolution of the court be communicated to the chancellor of the exchequer:—

“ That the court of directors, after a very solemn deliberation, adequate to the importance of the subject, are unanimously of opinion, that should such a loan (viz. a loan of £3,000,000 to the emperor) take place, they are but too well grounded in declaring (from the actual effects of the emperor’s last loan, and the continued drains of specie and bullion they still experience), that they

have the most cogent reasons to apprehend very momentous and alarming consequences.

“ They are, therefore, led to hope (after expressing their acknowledgments to the chancellor of the exchequer, for having hinted that the welfare and safety of the bank should, in this matter, supersede every other consideration), that he will be pleased to lay aside the adoption of such a measure, which they beg leave to *repeat*, would be, in their opinion, most fatal in its consequences.”

On the 14th of January, 1756, they came to the following opinion, which was likewise communicated to the minister :—

“ It is the opinion of the committee of treasury, that the governor and deputy-governor should represent to the chancellor of the exchequer, that they cannot look upon the scheme of assisting the emperor to raise a loan in Germany by the guarantee of the parliament of Great Britain, in any light which will not, one way or other, be detrimental to this country, even if a law were passed by parliament to prevent British subjects for taking any share therein.

“ That such a call for money in Germany will occasion demands of it from hence. German, Italian, and other foreign capitalists who have property here, will be induced to draw it away.

“ People in Holland, who, by the late acts, have money locked up here, may go to Germany and draw for it from thence.

“ That funds which would otherwise be employed in speculations of trade with England, may, by such an opportunity of investment at home, be diverted from the one to the other purpose.

“ That the exchange between this country and Hamburgh may be much affected by it.

“ That in spite of legal prohibitions, it is to be apprehended that some people here would take shares in such a negotiation under the names of their foreign correspondents.

“ From these and other causes they are fully of opinion, that the governor and deputy-governor can give no advice to Mr. Pitt in favour of such a measure, which is indeed of a wide political extent, and beyond the line of their duty to judge.”

These are but a small part of the proofs that ought to be before us ; the rest are still more important, to show the premeditated design of the minister, and his obstinate perseverance, notwithstanding the declared opinions which were given upon the subject from the authorities to which I have alluded.

On the 11th of February, 1796, there was formed the following resolutions :—

“ Resolved, That it is the opinion of this court, founded upon its experience of the effects of the late imperial loan, that if any farther loan or advance of money to the emperor, or to any other foreign state, should, in the present state of affairs take place, it will, in all probability, prove fatal to the Bank of England.

“ The court of directors do therefore most earnestly deprecate the adoption of any such measure ; and they solemnly protest against any responsibility for the calamitous consequences that may follow thereupon.

“ Resolved, That the governor and deputy-governor do communicate these resolutions to the chancellor of his Majesty's exchequer.”

The house shall now hear the answers of the ministers to these opinions and remonstrances :—

ANSWER TO THE FIRST.

“ *The chancellor of the exchequer having perused the resolution with great attention, repeatedly said, that certainly, as matters were there stated, he should not think at present of bringing forward such a measure ; adding, that though he should, in opening the budget, make it known that he had made a reserve with the present contractors for the loan, to permit the emperor's raising three millions should circumstances require it, he should lay aside all thoughts of it, unless the situation of things, relative to the bank, should so alter as to render such loan of no importance or inconvenience to them in perspective.*

“ *The governor promised him, that should such a change take place, and he should wish for the adoption of such a measure, he certainly would communicate it to him with pleasure.*

“ *Mr. Pitt wished very much to have the paper left with him for the purpose of communicating its contents to the cabinet, if he found it necessary ; promising that no one should have a sight of it elsewhere, and that if the governor would call upon him in two or three days, he would return it to him.*”

ANSWER TO THE SECOND.

“ *Mr. Pitt replied, that after the repeated intimations which he had given to the governor and deputy-governor of the bank, that no farther loan to the emperor would be resolved on without previous communication with the bank, and due consideration of the state of their circumstances, he did not see any reason for these resolutions ; that he did suppose they were adopted in a moment of alarm, and that he should consider them in that light.*”

After this solemn promise, and after expressing his idea, that the last resolution was adopted in the moment of alarm, he agreed to send a million and a half to the emperor, without the knowledge of parliament, and with a determination that parliament should not know of it. If I am not misinformed, all the advances that were made to ministers were accompanied with very strong remonstrances against the mischievous tendency which they had on the credit of the bank, and which remonstrances were answered by repeated assurances that the sums should be punctually paid. If what I heard upon the subject be true, the chancellor of the exchequer ought not only to dread the anger of the public for his conduct in this business, but he ought to be ashamed even to

face the cabinet itself. On the 6th of October commenced the present session of parliament: now mark the words which the present minister put into the mouth of the sovereign on that day, in addressing the two houses of parliament: his Majesty was made to say, on that day, amongst other things—

“ I rely on your zeal and public spirit for such supplies as you may think necessary for the service of the year. It is a great satisfaction to me to observe, that, notwithstanding the temporary embarrassments which have been experienced, the state of the commerce, manufactures, and revenue of the country, proves the real extent and solidity of our resources, and furnishes you such means as must be equal to any exertions which the present crisis may require.”

I say, that when these words were uttered, the chancellor of the exchequer knew from the representations of the bank—he knew from the past exertions made to supply the emperor—that the bank would be unable to continue its advances, without being in danger of that which has since actually happened; this he knew when he penned the speech to which I have alluded, and deliberately put into the mouth of the sovereign that which he (the minister) knew to be a falsehood. He cannot plead ignorance of these things; he had no means of avoiding the knowledge of them. The bank directors, I own, were blamable in complying with the minister's demands, but he was criminal in making such demands. These loans avowed, and the loan concealed, brought the bank to its present condition; in which we see it unable to pay the public creditor.

I now come to the order in council. The whole of that proceeding is founded upon the representation of the chancellor of the exchequer. None of the proceedings which led to that order are in writing, I believe; they keep no journal; I wish they did, and I wish that the minutes of that business were before this house. I should like that the house should see, whether the representations made by the chancellor of the exchequer had any resemblance to truth. To see, whether he laid before the council the various remonstrances that were made to him by the directors of the bank; whether he informed the council of one word of the real state of the bank. I say, I wish these things could be brought before the public. All that appears upon that subject is, that the order in council was made upon the mere assertion of the chancellor of the exchequer. These are the words of the order in council:—

“ Upon the representation of the chancellor of the exchequer, stating, that from the result of the information which he has received, and of the inquiries which it has been his duty to make respecting the effect of the unusual demands for specie that have been made upon the metropolis, in consequence of ill-founded or exaggerated alarms in different parts of the country, it appears, that unless some measure is immediately taken, there may be reason to apprehend a want of sufficient supply of cash to answer the exigencies of the public service. It is the unanimous opinion of the board, that it is indispensably necessary for the public service that the directors of the Bank of England should forbear issuing any cash in payment until the sense of parliament can be taken on that subject, and the proper measures adopted thereupon, for maintaining the means of circulation, and supporting the public and commercial credit of the kingdom at this important conjuncture: and it is ordered, that a copy of this minute be transmitted to the directors of the Bank of England; and they are hereby required, on the grounds of the exigency of the case, to conform thereto until the sense of parliament be taken as aforesaid.

Now, I ask, was this a representation of the truth? or was it a falsehood? Was the pressure actually produced by the unusual demands for specie that were made upon the metropolis? or was it not the gradual growing result of that which was repeatedly stated by the bank to the chancellor of the exchequer? I say it was from the latter, and the chancellor of the exchequer knew it, and it is an aggravation of his guilt, that he abused the unsuspecting temper of his Majesty, who was present at this council, by misrepresenting the fact.

I have stated all the communications we know of between the bank and the minister. We have the authority of the former, that the advances to the emperor were the main cause of the difficulties in which we are now involved. This I should think pretty good authority. But when we see all their predictions verified by the event, I must respect their opinion more. I say, sir, these arguments are sufficient to prove, that we are bound to expect from the minister, before any farther advances are made to the emperor, full proof that those advances will be compatible with the revival of public credit. Upon that part of the subject I admit that there is a defect, arising from our not having the whole information necessary. But leaving, for a moment, out of the discussion, the question of the degree of deference due to the bank, and the possibility that their opinion may be invalidated by the testimony of other persons more acquainted, we may be told, with the interests of the bank than the directors themselves; but taking it for granted that we shall have a cross-examination

upon the subject, I pass it by for the present, and proceed to state what my opinion is, of another loan to the emperor, in the present state of the country. I wish to take the question fairly, and to put out of my mind the prudential reasons of the case, and the probability of repayment; though on the face of it we are not, as guardians of the public purse, justified in lending money, without a probability of its being repaid. But I will fairly admit, that if another loan be necessary for our co-operation, and if it be connected with the vital interests of the state, the prospect of repayment is a subordinate consideration. The gentlemen on the opposite side seem to be glad of this admission. I admit I am not surprised that they are glad, because they must see that there is no probability of repayment. His Imperial Majesty was bound to pay the first loans by instalments, to discharge the interest punctually, and to send a commissioner to this country, as his agent. He failed in all these engagements; he paid no instalments, was not punctual in paying the interest, and sent no commissioner, whom, I should have thought, he might have sent, because it would have been attended with little or no expense. That he paid the interest by more loans I grant; but the commissioner was wholly omitted. As to any future prospect of repayment, we have this pretty satisfaction, that, by the last paper laid upon the table, the emperor engages to repay the £500,000 that has been advanced to him out of any further loan that may be furnished. There are no means so good as this: Mexico and Peru are not so excellent a source—they may by some accident fail; but if one debt is to be repaid, only when a man lends you more money, there is no security half so solid and so strong. We have, by the treaty respecting the first loan, a security upon the emperor's hereditary dominions; we have a claim upon Brabant; the Netherlands are mortgaged to us; we are, I may safely say, not mortgagees in possession; and as the French do not seem inclined to cede them to us, I do not lay much stress upon that security. But as an argument in favour of another loan, it is said, that the emperor's resources will be amply sufficient after the war. If that is the case, it is a strong reason against imposing such additional burthens upon this country, in its present exhausted state; but if it should not be the case, will it not render the prospect of repayment more distant? But I will not dwell upon this part of the subject, because if farther advances

are connected with the vital interests of the state, it will be immaterial to my argument, whether they are furnished by way of gift or of loan. In considering the subject in the next point of view, I shall not state it as a method of forcing peace. I by no means take it even as an indirect mode tending to lead to peace, but as the worst means of continuing the war. Under this impression, I contend, that whatever gentlemen may think of the war—whether they think that it ought to be carried on *ad internecionem*—that it was just and necessary in its origin, and wise and practicable in its object—that it was, in short, everything which I do not think it—I say, whatever their opinions may be, they ought still to support my proposition; because the question is not whether another loan will or will not be an accommodation to the emperor, but whether it will do him greater benefit, or us greater injury. This is the fair way of considering it; and in that point of view it must be proved, what never has been attempted to be proved, that the emperor cannot take the field without another loan. Are we to suppose that, notwithstanding the former sums that have been sent to him, he cannot make any vigorous effort without this new one? Will gentlemen argue, that he can make no military exertions except his troops are well paid? I need not remind those gentlemen of their declaration, so often made, that the French must fly before troops disciplined and regularly paid. We have fatal experience of the folly of those declarations; we have seen soldiers frequently without pay, not seldom without sufficient provisions, put to rout the best paid armies in Europe. If I am to be told that they are influenced by a principle “which they of the adverse party want”—that they possess an enthusiastic attachment to the cause which they support—that they are actuated by a spirit of indignation at the oppression attempted to be exerted against them—that it is this has nerved their arms and steeled their hearts—if I am to be told that the emperor, even for his last stake, cannot rouse his subjects to such efforts, and such enthusiasm—why then, I say, the cause is desperate indeed, and you will be throwing away your money without being able to do any effectual service to your ally. And do I demand from the subjects of Austria greater sacrifices than have been made by the people of Great Britain? By these sacrifices have we been reduced to our present situation. Having, therefore, been so reduced, we must see the absolute necessity of re-

storing public credit by all the means in our power. We must never lose sight of this, that it is the credit of Great Britain that has been the terror of her enemies: it is her life-blood and marrow; and whenever it is gone, she will be reduced—not, perhaps, to a lifeless body, but to a small and insignificant trunk in the eyes of all Europe. I say, sir, therefore, we must look to our actual situation. I have lately sat upon the secret committee, and I beg here to say, that no intention has been discovered to disguise anything from that committee. I feel myself responsible for every figure taken, except where objections were stated that the committee did not go fully into all the circumstances, merely, as will appear, on account of the pressure of time. The result will be this, that we have doubled the national debt; that if this campaign be the last, twenty-six millions will not pay our permanent peace establishment; and if this campaign be, as I have said before, the last, we must, in addition to the burdens under which the people labour, lay on five millions of additional taxes. These are no slight considerations. There are others which the right hon. gentleman knows are of equal importance. How these additional taxes can be raised without the restoration of public credit—commerce depending solely upon that credit—I leave to others to determine. Under these circumstances, I would say to our ally, you must not ask me to do that which can only afford you temporary aid, but which must bring on me full and entire destruction. If we cast our eyes over the whole of the empire, we shall find nowhere pleasing prospects to dwell upon: even India, which we were fondly taught to expect assistance from, the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) knows is labouring under a pressure of a similar nature with this country—an army is on foot watching Tippoo; and even our old ally, the nabob of Arcot, is not in a state of perfect good understanding. In the West Indies, if we are to keep the conquests, which, with a savage barbarity, we persist in making in St. Domingo, only to purchase graves for our gallant countrymen, you must look, not only to your present expenses, but to your permanent peace establishment. At home, we are told, money is the only commodity in which the army will be paid; that the internal peace of the country depends upon it. We are told, by insinuation, that the burdens of the people are so great, that the repose of every member of the house rests upon the army being paid in specie. Look

to the state of Ireland. If we can possibly retain our connection with that kingdom—if a civil war in that country, brought on by the detestable measures that have been adopted by ministers, can be avoided, must there not be a supply of money for the maintenance of public credit there? Is it not a fact that Mr. Pelham, who was here a month ago, was assured that part of the loan that was to be raised in this country, should be for the service of Ireland; and that he was promised a million and a half in hard gold?—a promise made, I should suppose, under a firm conviction of its being the only means of procuring peace in that kingdom, if peace can be procured by any means. Upon the state of the funds in this country, I look back to a year from the day on which I am now speaking. I find that the five per cents. were then at 101, and the three per cents. $69\frac{1}{2}$. What are they on this day? The five per cents. are at $72\frac{1}{2}$, and the three per cents. at $49\frac{1}{2}$. And this in one year. What may be their fall in another year, is a calculation that must appal the stoutest mind to contemplate. Can anything be done to restore the funds, but by restoring public credit? It may be said, that, in the present state of the country, it is wrong to lay before the public so dark a statement. I say, sir, nothing is wrong that is true; no evil is so great as concealment. I do not wish to encourage despair, but I wish to avoid deceit. I must oppose this system of delusion that has so long been practised upon the country. Do we want an example? Let us look to the bank. The bank were trustees for others; they forgot their situation; they trusted to the promises of the right hon. gentleman, and they made large advances to him. We see how it has fared with them, and so will it fare with this house, if we go on confiding as we have done. Whether the minister was deceived himself, or whether he deceived the bank, will be a subject of future inquiry; but enough has already been laid before us at present, to enable us to come to this conclusion, that we must withhold all farther confidence from him. There is another point of view of the subject, in which I am aware that an attempt to bring the house to vote that no farther advances shall be made to the emperor, may be said to lead to the worst effect—that of retarding peace. As a measure of war, we have a right to say to the emperor that we have done all we can. We have not given our last guinea only, but our honour. We have a right to desire him to call upon his own subjects.

But it may be asked, without considering the measure with a view to the continuance of the war, in what state are we putting any possible negotiation for peace? Will it induce France to offer terms which she would not have offered, if we had furnished the emperor with the assistance required? I think it would produce an effect directly contrary. I am persuaded, that if one thing could give more delight to France than another, it would be the knowledge that the commons of England have resolved to persevere in the present ruinous system. The French would not then care whether the emperor's troops carried on offensive or defensive war; they would not then value the loss of this or that portion of territory; they would console themselves with the reflection, that this proceeding of the commons was, perhaps, slowly, but surely, sapping and undermining the pillars of the public credit of Great Britain; and they would see the certainty of making a conquest of us. In the event, therefore, of any negotiation (which I do not expect under the present minister—which is neither practicable with him, nor could be successful), I see that the effect that would be produced would be directly contrary to that which has been predicted.

With regard to the general safety of this country, admitting our credit to be restored, I should despair as little as any man; but I fear that some among us think, that our apprehension about public credit is ill-founded, and that if we get into the system of the French, and rely upon paper, we shall be an overmatch for them. If there is to be no regard to public credit and national faith; if there is to be no dread of a national bankruptcy—if “perish commerce, perish credit,” be the determination of gentlemen, I will not pretend to prophesy the result; but the feelings of the nation are, I believe, against such a scheme. If we were to fall in some other mode of warfare, there would be some dignity in our fall; but, in the present state, it has a meanness and disgrace in it; but should we even fall, in the endeavour to keep up the national honour, by endeavouring to preserve the public faith, we shall fall with dignity, and we shall expire with something like an enviable glory. As long as we are just to the people, so long shall we retain their affections; and I am confident, that if the trial were really to be made, whether this country should be a province of France, there would be but one heart; and, in the language of the best living poet, we shall exclaim:

“England, with all thy faults I love thee still!”

The statement which I have laid before the house, may be said to be more gloomy than circumstances warrant. I shall be glad to have it proved so ; but, at present, I am inclined to think that I have erred on the contrary side ; nay, so convinced am I of it, that I am ready to say, without farther information, taking the authorities we have, and reasoning upon what we know, that I would not give one guinea more to the emperor. Sir, I cannot but think, that, after what we have seen, we are placed in a more responsible situation with respect to our constituents ; though the bank, therefore, forgot the persons whom they represented, let us not follow their example. We have heard strange doctrines maintained of late. We have heard “ that the people have nothing to do with the laws, but to obey them ;” and it has been said, “ that the parliament belongs to the king, and not to the people.” I hope we shall not hear, in the present case, that the king’s honour is not engaged for another loan to the emperor, and that we, being the king’s parliament, must fulfil his engagements. Sir, I care not for the authority by which such doctrines are maintained ; they are the doctrines of pride, ignorance, and presumption ; and the more solemn the place where they are uttered, and the more sacred the function of the man from whom they proceed, the more libellous and treasonable are they in their nature. Sir, you know that we are bound to give advice to the king. You know that if any member dared to introduce the king’s name to influence any debate, you would immediately call him to order. We need not be told, that there is a suspicion abroad, of our looking too much to the crown, and too little to the people. We are not ignorant that all who have places under the crown, become so immediately suspected, that they must go again to the people, to know whether they have, or have not, by the acceptance of such places, forfeited their confidence. I do hope we shall on this day show that we belong to, and are responsible to, the people ; for if we persevere in the course that we have pursued, we shall not deserve to be called the king’s parliament, but the parliament of the emperor ; not the parliament of the King of Great Britain, but of the house of Austria. I have said, that I am prepared to vote that not a guinea more be furnished to his Imperial Majesty, and that we extend no farther aid to him ; but I am ready to refer to the judgment of others. Some have said, that there is information depending, which will

enable us to take a wider view of the subject. I have, therefore, so far accommodated my motion, as not to move any precise resolution, but to make a proposition which, I should hope, will meet with almost unanimous concurrence; for whether gentlemen think the war just or necessary, or wise and practicable, yet there is not one man here, I am persuaded, who will not agree with me, that the risk we run is greater than any possible benefit we can derive from it. I move, sir, "That the house will resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to inquire whether it is consistent, with a due regard to the essential interests of this country, that, under the present circumstances, any farther loans or advances should be made to his Imperial Majesty."

Mr. Pitt replied to Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Fox supported the motion.

Mr. Sheridan said, that were he disposed to reply at any great length to the right hon gentleman's (Mr. Pitt's) speech, that attempt on his part had been rendered perfectly useless by the able and complete answer of his right hon. friend. He, therefore, only rose in order to solicit some explanation on points where he imagined he was somewhat unfairly dealt with by the right hon. gentleman. He unquestionably understood that the chancellor of the exchequer had given him a pledge, that he would make the object of the present motion a separate and distinct question, and that he would himself bring it forward before a committee of supply, and give it, as far as depended on him, a fair, full, and satisfactory discussion. But without the most distant insinuation of anything uncivil and unpolite, might he not be permitted to ask, what security the right hon. gentleman was prepared to give, that he would bring forward the discussion he had thus so solemnly promised? Did not the right hon. gentleman promise the governor and directors of the bank that no farther loans should be made for the emperor? Did he keep that promise? No! And now that he makes a promise to the house with the same emphasis and solemnity, what assurance have the house that the promise shall be more faithfully adhered to? The language which such a conduct might justify it was not his wish to adopt; he was not prepared to assert that the right hon. gentleman would not keep his word; he would only venture to say that it was very possible he might change his mind; and, if so, what penalty is he to incur? He has bound himself not to make any farther advances to the emperor without previously commu-

nicating such intention to the house. But has he not done so already? and what was the censure passed by the house on that unconstitutional transaction? Did not the house resolve that it should not be drawn into a precedent; and that nothing could have justified it but the urgency of the case, by which he was justified in that instance? But may not the right hon. gentleman hold out again a similar pressure, and, on the plea of the special necessity of the case, come again to the house for an indemnity? He is now, as he says, willing and ready to discuss the propriety of farther advances. Was he so last year, when, of his own accord, he clandestinely sent money abroad without condescending to solicit the opinion or consent of parliament? The great stress of the right hon. gentleman's arguments rested on one point—that we wished to compel the emperor to a separate peace and the dangers that would arise from the loss of his co-operation. The right hon. gentleman had also accused him of not being over fond of speaking very respectfully of persons in the emperor's situation. Mr. Sheridan confessed that he never felt inclined to lavish panegyric on crowned heads. Unfortunately for themselves and for their subjects, they had but too many flatterers, and he was not ambitious to add to the number. But, if anything disrespectful to the emperor had been dropped on the present occasion, it most assuredly fell from the right hon. gentleman; it was he that libelled the emperor! it was he that said, unless we continued our subsidies his Imperial Majesty would withdraw his co-operation; it was he, therefore, who stigmatized that generous, that faithful ally, by supposing him to be a mere mercenary, pensioned monarch, like any of the petty princes of Germany. This was an aspersion never thrown on the emperor's conduct by him (Mr. Sheridan), or those who generally voted and acted with him.

But what now might be the amount of the meditated loan for his Imperial Majesty? Was it one, two, three, five, or ten millions? Last year there was remitted to him one million and a half; and are we now to say, that unless we give a million and a half to the emperor he will immediately make a separate peace? Surely, so paltry a consideration could never induce him to relinquish a contest that was undertaken for the support of religion, of justice, for the maintenance, nay, the very existence, of social order! He would surely rather make some sacrifice for

his subjects: endeavour to inspire them with that enthusiasm which animated the French, and seek some other resources more suitable to his situation. But, if we were to grant him but a small sum that small sum will be of little service; and if a large sum, then the largeness of the sum, and the expectation of more, might operate as a temptation for the continuance of the war. It was not from the interference of the Archduke Charles, or of Buonaparte, that we were to expect the termination of hostilities. The archduke might be eager to repair, or at least to maintain, the military character of Austria; nor might it be unalluring to him to contest the laurel of victory with a great and distinguished rival in martial fame; let this be as it may, sure he was, that as long as England could pay, Germany would not refuse to fight. Then where were our hopes of peace? Mr. Sheridan then compared the relative loss sustained by England and Germany during the course of the war, and he wished that this comparison might be held up by an honest minister of this country to an honest agent on the part of the emperor. That comparison would show, that if the one had served us by a powerful continental diversion, we had purchased that service by the loss of our national credit. Indeed, if we entered into that calamitous calculation, it would not appear that his Imperial Majesty lost more men than we did; but that our losses were equal—that it was ducat for ducat—brave for brave—widow for widow. If that friendly expostulation were made to the emperor, he must have confessed that we have already contributed our full share of calamity. When to this we might add, that we have to contend against the combined fleets of Spain, Holland, and France, it would be also just for that agent to come to this conclusion, that Austria had rendered comparatively but little, and we the greatest service to the cause. Nor would he like to see our ministers break faith with the public creditor: he would be but little inclined to trust or continue any alliance with those who were not faithful to their engagements with their own subjects: for it was reasonable to expect that we should be just at home before we could do justice to others. But to all these considerations the right hon. gentleman did not think proper to advert. He ran from subject to subject, and dilated one vast variety of matter foreign to the question, promising us, however, a terrible fine speech on a future occasion, in which he would, doubtless, be

equally variegated and equally inclined to lead us agreeably astray in a blossomed wilderness of rhetoric.

The house divided on Mr. Sheridan's motion ; ayes 87 ; noes 266.

APRIL 26.

SUPPLY.

A discussion arose on the misapplication of a sum of money by the chancellor of the exchequer, which had been specifically granted for repaying advances made by the bank.

MR. SHERIDAN thought the distinction taken not worth dwelling upon. The money was given by the house for the purpose of paying the bank, and the minister failing in this, had obtained it under false pretences. As the report of the committee of finance had been the subject of some animadversion, he should say a few words on this point. The right hon. gentleman had misrepresented what he had said upon this report on a former occasion. He had said that he considered himself responsible for every part of it against which he had not dissented. He believed there was no material fallacy in the report. The instructions under which they acted, however, had prevented them from proceeding entirely in the manner which his right hon. friend had justly preferred. He should now only say a single word on the taxes ; for it was the custom of the right hon. gentleman to consider the taxes as unanimously assented to, if they were received with no marks of disapprobation on their first introduction. In no part of his speech had the right hon. gentleman fully met our situation, and many of the taxes proposed he thought highly exceptionable. They were as frivolous and vexatious as they would prove oppressive and unproductive. They also carried with them this additional calamity, as was truly observed by his right hon. friend (Mr. Fox), that they would not answer the views of the minister, who would soon be obliged to lay on the shoulders of the people an equal or greater load of fresh taxes. To that on plate alone he had no objection. That on tolls was inconsistent with every idea of propriety and justice ; and the tax on newspapers he could not but regard as a vital blow struck at the liberty of the press, in the only manner by which a minister could dare to aim at it, by putting the inform-

ation conveyed in them at a price beyond the reach of the majority of the public.

The newspapers were denominated a luxury, but was the dismal catalogue of miseries and distress which they now almost constantly contained, a luxury to those by whom they were read? The tax proposed went ultimately to the annihilation of cheap publications, for the instruction or information of the public. It was not surprising, however, that such ministers as the present should be desirous by any means to impose a check on their progress, or completely to accomplish their destruction.

A division took place on the resolution respecting newspapers, at the desire of Mr. Sheridan.—For the resolution 151; against it 43.

MAY 8.

MUTINY OF THE CHANNEL FLEET, AND AUGMENTATION OF
THE PAY OF THE NAVY.

On this day the estimates were taken into consideration, for the purpose of augmenting the pay of the seamen, in consequence of the mutiny which had broken out in the channel fleet. Previously to stating them, Mr. Pitt expressed much repugnance to detail, as usual, the motives on which he founded the necessity of applying to the house for an addition to the public expenditure. He declared that, on the present occasion, he did not find himself at liberty to enter into a detail of the transactions that led him to apply. They were such that he felt himself obliged to say, that he would trust their judgment would induce them to concur in his motion, without making it the subject of a long discussion; nor was he able to enter into a statement of the events that had more recently happened; and if he were, he should feel a reluctance in doing it, as they were wholly, or in a great degree, to be ascribed to misrepresentations. To silence these, and to appease at once all discontent, nothing, in his opinion, would be so effectual as the unanimous decision of parliament on the proposal before them. He, therefore, thought it his duty to entreat the house to pass their silent judgment on the present case, while they coincided with the motion it occasioned him to make. He then moved for a total of £436,000 to answer the additional pay and allowances to the seamen and marines in the navy. The resolutions to this intent being read,

MR. SHERIDAN said, he certainly should vote for the resolution, but there was a question he should propose to the right hon. gentleman, which might be answered without involving that discussion which he wished to avoid, or that mischief which he apprehended. In allusion to the new disturbances which were said to exist, the right hon. gentleman had said that nothing was so likely to restore tranquillity as an immediate vote in favour of

the resolution. But why then did not the right hon. gentleman avail himself of the opportunity of submitting that vote sooner, when it might have prevented the disturbances it was meant to appease? Why was it that the vote was to be proposed when information was received that new disturbances had broken out? Why did he not take immediate steps in consequence of the promises which were made? Why, instead of the slow and procrastinating mode that had been followed, had not the right hon. gentleman come with a message from the throne, recommending the house to take measures to carry into effect what had been done? He distinctly asked, then, why a fortnight's delay had taken place before any steps were adopted to carry into effect what had been done? How could they rely that even what they were to vote would be properly carried into effect? From the words of the lords of the admiralty, that they had come to the resolution of acceding to the demands of the seamen, "that they might have as early an opportunity as possible of returning to their duty, as it may be necessary that the fleet should speedily put to sea meet the enemy of the country," it was plain that they did not expect that the seamen were to return to their duty upon that promise; but that some other proceedings would immediately follow upon it. The first step, then, ought to have been a communication to the house, and such a vote as this, passed with unanimity, would have perfectly satisfied them. He thought too highly of the character of British seamen, to imagine that this vote would not satisfy them; and if it did not, he should think more degradingly of them than he did at present. Misrepresentations might have induced them to do what they ought not to have done; but the right hon. gentleman ought to have prevented the possibility of such misrepresentation. He was convinced, however, that means of conciliation would be more effectual if accompanied with a vote of censure on ministers, for not coming to parliament sooner with some proposition on the subject.

Mr. Pitt said, it was a mistake to imagine that the proposition had been brought forward in consequence of any new occurrences.

Mr. Sheridan said, that he did not state that the resolution was now brought forward in consequence of recent occurrences. He charged the right hon. gentleman with the delay that had taken place. He believed that misrepresentation might have

taken place, but that misrepresentation ought to have been anticipated by some earlier proposition on the subject. He pressed the right hon. gentleman to inform the house what motive, what reason, what pretence, could exist for the delay of a fortnight which had intervened? He did not impute any responsibility to the admiralty, as they had done all they could do.

The resolutions passed nem. con.

MAY 9.

MUTINY IN THE CHANNEL FLEET, &c.

On this day the charge against ministers of procrastination was renewed by Mr. Whitbread, who declared, that it appeared to him of such consequence that he considered it his duty formally to inquire, why ministry had not, at an earlier period, applied to the house, and thereby prevented the dangers that had resulted from this neglect. The answer of Mr. Pitt was, that every proper step had been adopted to obviate the unhappy event which had taken place. Mr. Fox justified the censure which he trusted the house would pass on administration.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he was confident that not a doubt remained in the mind of any gentleman in the house of the shameful misconduct of his Majesty's ministers; nor had he any doubt but that they all felt regret at what had happened, and indignation at those who were the cause of it, as well as contempt for their incapacity. He should himself, if his hon. friend had not given notice of it, have brought forward an immediate vote of censure upon ministers for having delayed this measure, but that he wished that nothing should now stand in the way of passing the bill. The reason which the minister offered as an apology for the delay that had taken place, was not to be endured under the circumstances of the time. The minister now pretended to say, that he waited for an estimate of the expense which will attend this measure. Did he really believe that the public were to be so insulted? He could have brought this estimate down to the house at the very hour after the king's proclamation was issued. He was ready enough to avoid all delay in granting the imperial loan; nay, so anxious was he upon that measure, that he would not wait for three days, although it was notorious that intelligence was expected to arrive which would put that loan out of the question. He was ready enough, also, to use all due diligence to stop the payment of the bank, and to

cause the king to come to town at an unusual hour, and in the most extraordinary way, in order to issue the order of council for that purpose. But he saw nothing in this measure—upon which the very existence of the nation depended—that required haste. This was such shameful neglect that he trusted the house would feel it, as he was sure the public felt it, with abhorrence. The minister was absolutely without excuse for the delay that had taken place : he knew that the sailors were dissatisfied. He now came forward with his unavailing regret that any disturbances had happened ; he pretended that they arose from misunderstanding. Could there be any wonder at that misunderstanding ? Had the sailors not a promise from the admiralty, and was not that promise afterwards treated with apparent indifference by the king's ministers ? Did they not delay the measure which could alone give it sanction ? Had they, therefore, no reason for doubting the sincerity of the minister ? It was true, indeed, that in most cases where money was to be called from the people, the minister's promise was precisely the same thing as a vote of the house of commons,—at least there was reason for thinking so from former facts ; but it was not wonderful that the sailors thought otherwise, for they judged more of what parliament ought to be than what it really was by its modern practice ; and, therefore, unless the minister had lost his very superior intellects, it was impossible for him not to foresee the consequences that followed. He could not but foresee, that when the order was given for the fleet to weigh anchor, that jealousy would remain among the sailors ; and therefore he was, to all intents and purposes, answerable for the consequences that ensued.

With respect to the notice of his hon. friend he hoped he would not pursue it this day, because the minister might complain of the want of candour in bringing such a matter forward on a sudden ; for that there could be no reason, but there was no necessity for giving him the pretext ; and the more opportunity that was given to him to prepare himself the better, and he hoped he would prepare a much better defence than any he had hitherto urged. He ought, however, to give to the house some account of what he expected to be the feelings of the sailors when this measure should pass, in order that the house might have satisfaction in what they were doing. Be the claims of the sailors what they may, what was now proposed to be granted to them

was nothing more than justice: at the same time that he said this, he must not omit to state distinctly his decided disapprobation of the mode in which these demands were insisted upon; it was unfair, and inconsistent with the brave, generous, and open character of British seamen; nor had he a doubt but there had been a foul interference with them, and means of the basest nature used, to induce them to take the steps which they had taken. If men were oppressed, they ought to be relieved by their country; but, however just their complaints were, they ought to complain in a regular way. If there were men among them, as he believed there were, that advised the sailors to put their country into such peril as it stood in at this moment, for the mere purpose of having their objects carried, such men were the most base of traitors. He suspected there were persons of this description, and the evil was of the most alarming kind, when the enemy were actually preparing in the most formidable manner against us. He thought that listening to the suggestions of such foes to this country would never have been the fault of the brave British seamen. The country were to look to the ministers for the great cause of all this; and we were now in a situation in which common measures would not do, and therefore he should have to propose one of an uncommon kind. If he were told, that by proposing it, he encroached on executive government, he should answer, that executive government had already encroached so much upon the representative part as to make his measure absolutely necessary. He thought that the sailors had much distrust in the promises of the executive government;—and perhaps they might not have sufficient faith in the pledge of that house. They had evidently shown they had no faith in those who had hitherto negotiated with them, if accounts were true, as he was afraid they were; for it appeared by them, that when the town was lulled yesterday into a sanguine hope that the disturbances were over, and that the *London* had sailed down to St. Helen's, and that Admiral Colpoys was gone with her, the delegates went on shore to view the dead bodies of those who fell in the scuffle. If this be true, as he feared it was, he would ask what was to be done with the fleet? What measure was to be taken? Had any been taken to prevent future mischief? Anything to prevent the most horrid of all calamities? He believed none. This was a single instance, and a fresh one, of the deplor-

able incapacity of the present ministers in this critical conjuncture. By their criminal and murderous delay they had brought on this dreadful evil; at their door should be laid the blood that had been shed upon this occasion: and yet, after all this, the right hon. gentleman came to the house and asked for confidence, as if nothing was the matter. He gave no answer to any question put to him, but desired the house to pass the whole matter by in silence. He said he really did not wish to give way to his feelings, and therefore he should endeavour to restrain himself. What would be the effect if the house followed the example set before them by the minister? A sullen silence was to be observed. What would the inference be which the sailors would draw from this?—Why, that the parliament had passed this measure unwillingly, because an advantage had been taken of it, and in which they were not sincere, and which they would, therefore, abandon as soon as they had an opportunity of doing so. He hoped, therefore, that it would be expressed as the general sentiments of the house, that they did give and grant this, as the real right of the British navy; but if it was given in that sullen, silent manner, which the minister proposed, it would not be giving to the sailors the security they desire. It was a curious thing to see the minister, whose negligence brought on this evil, holding in his own hand the helm of the vessel, which, by his piloting, had been steered among the rocks, tell the sailors, “hold your tongues, let not a word be spoken; I will bring you safe through all your dangers; and, as a proof that I will do so, I am the person who brought you into them.” His own incapacity was the ground on which he called for future confidence. He thought, therefore, that if the other house was sitting, that the house of commons ought to send it a message to desire their immediate concurrence to the appointment of a committee, consisting of a small number of the members of each house. It could not be a question on which any party feelings could operate; on this question there could be but one feeling; he should therefore propose that a joint committee be appointed—to have power to send for persons and papers—to sit from time to time, and to adjourn from place to place as occasion might require, and there could be no difficulty as to the spot where they ought to be, and that they should proceed without any adjournment above eight hours from time to time, and commence without delay. He felt that

this was the only measure by which we could extricate ourselves from this horrid calamity.

Mr. Whitbread postponed his motion till the following day.

Mr. Sheridan said he had given notice that he should move for a committee. The minister had chosen to misunderstand his meaning, for he had said that he should propose that they should have power to send for persons and papers, and to adjourn from time to time, and from place to place. Did the minister mean to say, that it would be improper for such a committee to correspond with the sailors? Had not the executive government corresponded with them already? Were not the sailors, to say no worse, in a state of insubordination at this moment? Would he say there was danger in inquiring into our situation? He knew not what the minister would say; he regretted to learn that the minister was to oppose his motion, but he should at all events make it.

MAY 23.

MUTINY IN THE NAVY.

MR. SHERIDAN said, I rise to give notice of my intention to bring forward to-morrow, a motion upon a subject of considerable importance. There has been, every gentleman will recollect, a great difference of opinion respecting the manner in which we should proceed with respect to the navy. Some gentleman conceived, that the measures to be adopted ought to be adopted in perfect silence; others, among whom I was, thought the contrary; I was clearly of opinion, that if silence had been observed, it might have been construed into a sullenness, and, perhaps, into a degree of unwillingness on our part. But though the sentiments of gentlemen might differ upon that point, there is, I am sure, but one opinion, that the foulest misrepresentations have been made of what was said in the debate. I have seen a copy of a gross libel, which affects to be the manifesto of the sailors. I believe it to be a forgery, and I think it could be proved to be so from internal evidence. As far as it affects me personally, I should not have thought it worth attending to; but as it is with such industry circulated in all our ports as genuine, I hold it to be my duty to submit the subject to the house to-morrow, when I shall state more fully the motion which it is my intention to make.

MAY 26.

MUTINY IN THE NAVY.

MR. SHERIDAN said, sir, I now rise to address the house on a subject, in my opinion, as important as any of those which have of late occupied our attention ; a subject which is, in my humble opinion, in comparison of all others, deserving the most serious consideration and attention. Sir, I believe the idea which this house has formed of the motion I expressed my intention to make, has been founded on a mistaken notion. Many supposed, I have no doubt, that I merely meant to complain of a paper containing a gross misrepresentation with respect to the navy ; also something of a personal nature, immediately referring to myself. My opinion, sir, of the liberty of the press, and the advantage we derive from it, is such, that I should be sorry that any provocation to myself individually, should induce me to desire the interposition of the house, in any manner, against the proprietors and printers of the newspapers, who have inserted the paper of which I complain. On the contrary, sir, the proposition I had to make was of a consolatory nature. I do not retract in the smallest degree from that opinion which I expressed upon a former occasion, that the perseverance of the seamen in a state of insubordination, after their demands had been complied with, must have been owing to misrepresentations and falsehoods circulated among them. That there should be men in the country capable of employing such misrepresentations and falsehoods, is a matter much to be lamented : but there is something consolatory in the reflection, that the mischief is not in the minds of the seamen themselves, but is the consequence of the arts and delusions which have been practised upon them. Sir, I hold in my hand a paper which has been circulated with great industry among the seamen. It is a paper purporting to be an appeal to the British nation from the seamen on board Lord Bridport's fleet. This has been sent to Plymouth and Sheerness, where it has been circulated with the most fatal success. Sir, I did, on a former day, take the liberty of saying that this paper, from the internal evidence it carries with it, could not be the composition of the delegates of Lord Bridport's fleet ; I am still of the same opinion. Yet, I confess, there are certain circumstances of apparent authenticity about it, that I am not at all surprised the

printers and proprietors of newspapers should have been imposed upon, and led to believe it authentic ; and I have no hesitation in saying, I do firmly believe that the seamen, among whom this paper has been circulated, believe it to be the proclamation of the delegates of Lord Bridport's fleet, and that they were well founded, in point of fact, in the assertion that their grievances remained unredressed ; I am, therefore, not surprised that they should have remained in a state of insubordination. The paper in question was printed at Portsmouth, by the printer who had been employed by the delegates, and the manuscript was brought to him from on board the fleet. If it was brought by the delegates themselves, they must have been grossly imposed upon ; for, throughout the whole of the paper, it is evident that it does not express the sentiments of British seamen. The language in which it is drawn up, is more like the language of a circulating library, than that of a forecastle. It is no more the production of a British seaman, than a British seaman is the enemy of his country. This paper purports to be an appeal to "A Loyal and Discerning Nation." It states the whole of the transactions which have taken place, and asserts that, notwithstanding his Majesty's most gracious pardon, it was the intention of his Majesty's ministers to select and execute the seamen who were the principal ringleaders. It states that schemes were laid out to sacrifice some of the brightest gems that ever adorned this or any other country ; and that no sooner was that pardon granted, but in direct contradiction to it, were individuals selected for the express purpose of sacrificing them to malice and private resentment. Now, sir, when a paper of this description is zealously circulated round our coasts, is it not fit that a clear contradiction should be given to it?—Is it not necessary that a paper which has manifestly imposed on the understandings of British seamen should be cleared up to them, and its falsehoods detected ? With respect, sir, to the calumny itself, it would be an insult to the understanding of the house, if I should suppose a doubt existed respecting it. I am no friend to his Majesty's ministers ; on the contrary, I think there is not a more determined, irreconcilable, and inflexible enemy to them and their system than myself ; but to insinuate that they, or any one of them, could have possibly harboured such a thought as that imputed to them by this manifesto ; that any one of them could have had

such an intention, after the pardon granted by his Majesty to the seamen—if I could insinuate this, I should deem myself not merely an enemy to his Majesty's ministers, but of the country. Sir, I cannot be suspected of complimenting the house of commons; I have differed from them on almost all occasions; yet, I think I may say, that with respect to good will towards British seamen, its sentiments have never been different from my own. If ever man loved man—if ever one part of the people loved another, the people of this country love the seamen. The individuals of this house have ever loved the seamen, and in this respect have shown themselves the representatives of the people. Whatever has been at any period proposed in this house for the benefit of the seamen, has been adopted; not only with readiness, but almost with acclamation. A right hon. gentleman, whom I do not see in his place (Mr. Dundas), has, on many occasions, brought questions before this house, for the advantage of the seamen, which have been acquiesced in with the same satisfaction with which they were proposed.

With respect to that part of the publication which relates to myself, I have but to recur to the style of it in order to convince the house it never was the composition of British seamen. It runs, "Oh! Sheridan, Sheridan! if this be your mean opinion of British seamen, thou knowest little—very little, of seamen's sentiments." Sir, I certainly did say, if they remained dissatisfied after their request had been granted, and at a time too when the fleet of the enemy might be at sea—I did say if, after their demands were satisfied, they remained in port, endangering by such conduct the safety of the British empire, that it must be because they were worked upon, and their judgment misled, by a species of the foulest and basest treachery. The paper states farther, "What! accuse us of treachery—impute treachery to us! its principles we disavow."—Sir, I appeal to the candour of any man, whether it was, in the remotest degree, accusing the seamen of treachery, when I said they must be the objects of that treachery which had been the cause of their delusion, if they continued dissatisfied after their demands were complied with? They could not have selected any individual on whom to make a charge of such a nature who so little deserved it. Sir, with respect to another observation in the same paper, "that the right hon. gentleman, thinking he had defeated the chancellor, attacked

the poor but loyal tars," it is equally inapplicable to me. I wish the former part were true; I wish to God I had defeated the chancellor of the exchequer. Sir, I cannot instance a greater proof of my endeavours to promote the advantage of the seamen, than that, in the year 1786, in the seventh session of the then parliament, a gentleman did twice bring a bill before the house, which I afterwards renewed, for the general benefit of seamen: and though the principles of such bills were objected to, it did happen they had for their object the redress of those grievances which have of late been the subject of complaint. Sir, I have ever been their friend, [but never more so than at this period, in warning them against those artifices which have been practised to seduce them. When people tell them that the navy can be managed without subordination, they may as well tell them a ship can be managed without a rudder; they had better pull down the masts and the shrouds, and lay them on the deck, than listen to] such representations. At the same time, sir, it should be understood that there are no farther grievances, if any exist, which we will not redress. It was my intention to have proposed to the consideration and adoption of the house a motion of a consolatory nature; yet, from what I have heard upon the subject, I am convinced his Majesty's ministers can have but one wish on the subject, namely, to restore that harmony in our navy, which has been so unhappily interrupted. I shall not press my motion: I thought it necessary to make those few observations, that an opportunity might be given of contradicting the contents of a paper evidently circulated with the worst intentions.

Mr. Pitt complimented Mr. Sheridan for the fair, candid, and liberal conduct he had adopted in this business.

MR. GREY'S MOTION FOR A REFORM IN PARLIAMENT.

Mr. Grey, in pursuance of previous notice, rose this day to move for a reform in the representation of the people. He proposed that the county representation should remain nearly on the same footing; only that, instead of ninety-two county members, there should be one hundred and thirteen. For instance, instead of two for the county of York, there should be two for each riding; and so in other counties, where the present representation was not proportionate to the extent of population. In order to put an end to compromises, each county or riding should be divided into grand divisions, each of which should return one representative. With regard to the qualifications of electors, instead of confining the right of election to freeholders, it should be extended to copyholders and leaseholders, who were bound to pay a certain annual rent a certain number of years. But the reform which

he had to propose, in the other branch of representation, was of a much more extensive nature. It was, that the remaining four hundred members should be returned by one description of persons, which were householders. If it were possible, one person should not be permitted to vote for more than one member of parliament. In order to prevent expense, the poll ought to be taken throughout the whole kingdom at one time. This was the outline of the plan. Mr. Grey concluded his speech by moving for leave to bring in a bill to amend the representation of the people in the house of commons. Mr. Erskine seconded the motion. Mr. Pitt, Lord Hawkesbury, and others opposed it.

Mr. Sheridan said he had listened with great attention to the speech of the noble lord (Hawkesbury) who had just sat down: a speech which was so remarkable for its eloquence, and for its steady opposition *in limine*, against reform of all kinds, that it might as well be called a speech for a revolution, as one against reform. He should have commended it the more if it came from a quarter in which he could confide, and rest secure that the boldness of it would be followed up in the hour of attack; but when he reflected that it came from the same quarter as the sentiments that had been uttered against France, that we were to pursue a *bellum internecinum*; that we were engaged in the cause of law, of civil order, of humanity, of religion, and reflected on what part had been taken in the same quarter, and knew that these very persons who thus talked boldly and sturdily would afterwards, in the hour of real peril, be ready to crawl upon their knees and lick the blood off the feet of these regicides—when he contrasted this blustering language with the real spirit of those who uttered it, he was sure that if these same persons should enter into a *bellum internecinum* with the reformers of England, they might be made as humble with regard to them as they had shown themselves towards the French. He therefore was not surprised to hear the noble lord so bold in his speech against the reformers; but this assertion, that the parliament is now more popular than ever, was going a little farther than any other man had ever gone before. He liked the manner in which the noble lord proved, as he called it, the truth of that assertion; he stated the merits of Mr. Grenville's bill. It was an excellent regulation with respect to contested elections. How was it excellent? by taking away altogether from the house of commons the right of determining on the merits of contested elections; by showing that the house of commons could not, as men of honour, be trusted with the de-

cision of a matter as a contested election ; that they had given in false verdicts upon that matter frequently, and therefore ought to have that power no longer ; that therefore an act of parliament was necessary to take away their power, because they had acted dishonourably ; this was the noble lord's proof that there was no necessity for a reform in parliament. His next proof of the purity of parliament, and of the popularity of its present proceedings, was also curious. Some close boroughs, it seemed, had been thrown open ; Cricklade and Shoreham, and one or two others, were thrown into the general mass of representation ; and this was another proof that there was no necessity for a parliamentary reform. What did this motion go to ? Why, to make this, which, in the opinion of the noble lord, was an excellent measure, in these few instances, a general measure. These two or three little instances were, in the opinion of the noble lord, a great acquisition to the people, but the making the measure general would be a great evil. But the question was now boldly put, where did the people see their grievances ? They saw them in the extension of the excise laws. They saw them in the restraint that was put upon their speeches to each other. They saw them in the erection of barracks all over the kingdom. They saw them in the votes of the house of commons, by which their money was squandered upon objects that were never defined. They saw them in the money that was sent away to the continent without the consent, or even knowledge, of parliament. Put these grievances into one side of the scale, and the little acquisitions of Mr. Grenville's bill, and the throwing open of a few paltry boroughs into the other, and he believed the noble lord himself, although by no means a bashful man in that house, would be ashamed to hold the balance. The noble lord dwelt a great deal on what he considered as a very powerful argument, namely, that as there was a contrariety of opinion as to the plan of a parliamentary reform, that must be considered as a proof that the evil did not exist ; for that if it did, there would have been no difficulty about the remedy ; that must be clear. This reminded him of the adage, "When doctors differ, &c." If that was to be the answer, it would follow, that if doctors differ as to the remedy, the patient, although he may appear to be dying, must be taken to be in perfect health. He knew not where the noble lord had studied his logic, but certainly it was not

at the College of Physicians. There was one part of the complaint which never occurred to the noble lord. He touched upon the landed interest; he touched upon the interest of the boroughs; and most logically concluded, that there was no complaint against either; but it never entered into his mind that the minister would have too much interest with them all when assembled in the house of commons. Here he was reminded by the words of a person whom it was hardly regular for him to quote, as a reverend prelate, who had said that the parliament belongs to the crown. If that be so, he would say that he would not debate the remedy, whatever it be, for he was ready to say that the house of commons would be better in any hands than in the hands of the crown. But the noble lord had said, "Show me that the close boroughs have done more harm than popular places." He did not know what the noble lord meant by harm. He could show him that the proprietors of these close boroughs had acted on a system which must be cut up by the roots, or this country cannot stand. He would say that they had bought boroughs, and afterwards voted away the money and the rights of the people, as if both had been their own absolute property. That there had been a man in that house who had seven or eight seats in it; that he was connected with the minister, and that, without one foot of land in Ireland, he was made an Irish peer. He could show him persons who could not, indeed, buy men and sell them, because that was not yet to be done, but who bought and sold boroughs, and with them sold the dearest interests of the people. The noble lord, in part of his speech, put the close boroughs out of the question; indeed he would have acted judiciously in never taking notice of them, for they could not be of any service to his argument. But it seemed that ministers had met with support in the counties. He knew they had; and it was a thing much to be lamented, that men of large wealth should quit the nearest and dearest connections they had, for the purpose of following the dictates of a profligate minister; and, before any justice could be done to that part of the case, the noble lord must have counted all the coronets that have been given away by the present minister. Men who voted away all public principle for favours of this kind, were the most profligate and contemptible characters in the kingdom. What, if a county member knows that his name is entered in the pocket-book of

the secretary of the treasury as a person to be called to the other house, and votes anything that is desired of him in order to obtain that distinction?—he knew many of that description: they were called men of honour, but they were the reverse of it; they were enemies to the nation in which they lived. They pretended to vote for the cause of justice, and humanity, and religion, when, in point of fact, they were only laughing at the public, and voting away their rights to serve their own ambition. That was a great reason why the people called for a parliamentary reform. It was to a conviction that most public men have nothing in view but their own personal advantage, was owing all the mischief that had lately happened to our service. It was upon that principle the sailors and the soldiers reasoned. The house would set them a better example, by reforming parliament, if they had a spark of honour in them.

With regard to the question, as it had been argued by the chancellor of the exchequer, nothing was said upon the present representation of the people. The noble lord had fallen foul of all the doctrines which the chancellor of the exchequer had ever maintained upon reform, and he was sorry the chancellor of the exchequer had left the house; were he present he most likely would have saved him a good deal of trouble in replying to many parts of the speech of the noble lord.

A great deal had been said about throwing the country into confusion. The minister and his advocates affected to dread the principle of the present measure, because it seemed to proceed upon the Rights of Man, and because they said they were principles which had been adopted in the French revolution, and which principles led to so much horror. In this respect he must deny that the horrors of the French revolution were produced by the Rights of Man. There were bloody calamities in France after the French revolution; nobody disputed it; but that these calamities were produced by these principles he denied. There was not so much as one individual who was concerned either in writing or publishing any of these principles concerned in any of the massacres in that country; and here he must repeat what he said on former occasions, that excess of conduct was the natural effect of all revolutions when men shook off their slavery. When men are under the necessity of recovering their liberty by force, they are naturally intemperate. Man was not born to have pro-

perty in men ; and if he persists in maintaining that he has, there is no wonder when he falls a victim to his own iniquity and presumption. This ought to be a lesson to us. If the question was put to him, who were the real authors and abettors of these massacres, he should place certain despots in the front of his accusation.

It was impossible for anything to be more unjust than the view which the minister had thought fit to take of all the reformers to-night : he asked the public to look upon them all as so many masked traitors. He denied the justice of that description of them. That there might be among them some men of mischievous intentions, no man would dispute ; and when was any great public measure proposed, in which some such characters would not mingle ? but that they were considerable, either in number or talents, was what he did not believe. That he was no friend to such persons, but would, on the contrary, endeavour to detect them, he was entitled, by what he had said this day on another subject, to ask the house to believe. But when the minister took the whole complexion of a meeting from the intemperate speeches of a few intoxicated or superficial individuals who might casually attend a public meeting, it proved what he had already said of the minister, that he was ignorant of the nature of a popular assembly ; how could he be otherwise ? He never entered any assembly except the house of commons, and that was the reason why he could not make a distinction between the honest intentions of the mass of the people, and the absurdities of a few.

But the minister had endeavoured to make a great deal of the difference that subsisted between the reformers ; and he had said, that all that had been urged upon reform, when he was a party to it, was harmony itself compared to the discordance of late meetings. He thought that there was no harm in every man speaking openly what he thought upon the subject of parliamentary reform ; he wished every man's heart to be legible in these times of danger ; ingenuous openness was always, and at all times, much better than concealment. He knew not why universal suffrage should have been brought into such contempt ; he remembered at some meetings signing his name with the Duke of Richmond in favour of universal suffrage and annual parliaments. He considered it as the right of every man to propose that, if he thought fit ; the expediency of such a plan was

matter for discussion and deliberation; if any other plan was better, there was no reason why it should not be preferred; but it seemed now, he confessed he knew not why, to be treated as a species of treason; he was not at all ashamed of having signed it; there was no secrecy about the matter; it was published in all the newspapers: he thought this plan a better one; he thought also that the mass of the people would be satisfied with it; but that every man who thought universal suffrage the best plan, must necessarily wish for anarchy and confusion, was a thing which he would not admit. Some men claimed popularity, as well as other advantages, from their rank; but they were deceived if they thought they could prosecute others for following their opinions without being despised by the public.

It had been stated, that the number of those who wished for a reform in parliament was small. He did not believe it. He believed that the whole body of dissenters wished for a reform without pulling down the fabric of the constitution. He believed, also, that the mass of the people of Scotland had the same wish; for, at present, the whole forty-five were returned by men who had, some of them, not an inch of land in that part of the island.

He was not much of an egotist, nor was he, out of that house, an arrogant man. He was almost ashamed of the praise the minister had bestowed upon him to-day for merely doing his duty, when he spoke of the sailors. He hoped and he trusted, that much calamity as this country feels, we shall never bend our necks to an insolent foe; but will, if necessary, to a man, defend our rights with our lives. He must be allowed to say another word about himself, as it was now necessary. He had been accused of wishing to join with those who wish for anarchy. He would ask those who charged him with so foul a wish, what temptation he had to do so? What provocation had he to excite any opposition against the aristocracy of this land or against its monarchy? He had possessed, at one time, some confidence from the monarch, during the time he filled an office of considerable trust. He had been honoured with the confidence of an illustrious personage. He had been treated with civility by many of the first families in this country. He knew no occasion he had to regret the attention he had received from that house. He had no desire to break a lance with any orator in any other

place. He, therefore, expected credit for sincerity, when he declared that he supported this motion from his heart, because he thought in his conscience it tended to restore to the people some of the purity of their original excellent constitution, and to save the state from ruin.

The house divided ; for the motion 93 ; against it 258.

MAY 30.

NEW BANK.

Sir William Pulteney moved for leave to bring in a bill for erecting a new bank, in the event of the Bank of England not resuming its payments on the 24th of June next.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he had always desired to see public credit re-established in the person of the bank ; and, therefore, he had hitherto opposed the ideas of the worthy baronet upon that subject. But he did not find, by the arguments he had heard, that any idea was entertained that the bank was to resume its payments in cash. He differed from the worthy baronet as to the first duty of the bank. That hon. member looked upon the bank as having been instituted chiefly for the purpose of accommodating government. He wanted a public bank that would proceed on the narrow ground of looking to itself, and to itself only ; and he was persuaded, that until that was the case, there would be no such thing in this country as a paper circulation founded upon real credit. If the bank did not open on the 24th of June, he saw no reason, from anything that had been said to-night, for hoping that they would open at all. It was a farce to call that a bank which was never to give for paper anything but paper. It was admitted that the bank had, with great facility, assisted government from time to time. Now, if the bank was to be considered as bound to continue that assistance, the distresses of the government must continue to be the distresses of the bank. But he maintained that this was a practice which was against the general principle on which the bank ought to act, and on which alone it ought to be supported. The bank should say this—" We know nothing of the distresses of government, we look to the notes which we have issued, and we are determined to pay them when they become due." When we had an issue of paper, it was ridiculous to think of confidence in that paper upon any principle but that of its being paid when it

came due. If the bank was allowed to use any discretion in relieving the necessities of government, in preference to paying the demands of individuals upon themselves, such a bank could never have the confidence of the public, and fatal inconvenience would soon arise ; whereas, by separating the bank from the government, this truth would soon appear—that it is owing to the war that all these difficulties have arisen. By taking it to be the duty of the bank to assist government in all its distress, the bank can never be reasonably expected to open its payments in specie to its creditors ; it must give paper for paper for ever ; so that the bank would have five per cent. for giving its opinion upon the solvency of government ; and supposing them to owe ten millions upon their present paper, they would, in the course of fourteen years, by the operation of compound interest, realize to themselves the whole of that property : this was, in reality, giving nothing to the public creditor ; and therefore, unless he heard that the bank was to open payments in cash at some given time, he should be for opening another bank. With regard to the notes of the bank, he did not expect them to be at a discount, even although the bank should not pay in specie ; for now that we should require annually the sum of £26,000,000 in the collection of taxes, that would keep them at par while they were received in payment at the exchequer ; for any man receiving a large sum in bank notes, might readily pass them to a distiller, or any other person, who had two or three hundred thousand pounds to pay to the revenue. Thus the load of our debt kept up the credit of our bank notes—where the system was to end it was not difficult to guess. He wished the bank to resume a character for punctuality, and he wished to support it under that character ; but as no hope had been given that such was to be the case, he was under the necessity of supporting the motion. He spoke of the plan of Mr. Hartsink in terms of great approbation, and said that, in his mind, it promised to be very useful.

The house divided ; for the motion 15 ; against it 50.

JUNE 1.

LOAN.

The report of the committee of ways and means being brought up, and the resolutions read, Sir John Sinclair said, he hoped the resolution for granting an additional bonus to the subscribers of the loyalty loan would not be carried into effect. He objected to it ; first, because it was incompatible with the proceedings of parliament in the early part of the session ; secondly, because it could not go beyond the resolution of a former committee ; and thirdly, because he thought it ought to be grounded on a petition from the subscribers.

The Speaker informed him that, in regard to the first objection it was, the rule of the house, that no two resolutions, nor any two bills contradictory to each other could be passed in the same session. It remained for the house to decide whether this resolution was contradictory, or only explanatory, or supplementary, as, in the latter instance, the hon. baronet's objections would not apply. In regard to the second objection, the hon. baronet did not appear to have understood the practice of the house, since a committee of ways and means, or the house, might approve any resolution for extending the grants of a former committee, with this exception, that no additional burden could be imposed except in the land-tax. And, in regard to the third objection, a petition might with propriety have been presented, though not without a recommendation from the crown ; but that did not preclude any other mode. This was a transaction between the public and an individual ; and, if it was disadvantageous to the individual, it was not irregular to propose that he should not be held to the original bargain. Here he had to observe, as a strong proof of the power to make such a proposition, that in case a petition was moved to be presented, and the crown refused its recommendation, it was in the power of any member afterwards to bring forward a motion to the same effect. The only objection, therefore, which admitted of doubt, was the first ; and he left it to the decision of the house whether this resolution was contradictory, or explanatory, or supplemental ?

MR. SHERIDAN said he listened with great deference to the opinion of the chair, and he assented to the statement given on two of the objections ; he thought, however, that the resolution was contradictory to former resolutions in this session of parliament, as it went to alter an agreement and bargain already made, and to make terms contrary to that bargain sanctioned by an act of parliament. Had it been attempted to take part of the profit from the contributors, would there have been no objection on the point of form ? He should be sorry, however, if the question was to be got rid of merely by a point of form ; for never was there a case of more rank depravity, or one that more strongly deserved the name of an iniquitous job, than this transaction. He hoped, that from the impression made out of doors,

by the arguments against the measure, and the comparative number of the division last night, that the right hon. gentleman would not have stood upon a point of form, but have explained the substantial merits on which he defends their measure. If it were consistent with regularity, he should wish to ask, whether there had been any promise or engagement with the contributors to the loan of eighteen millions, that there was to be no other loan for the year?

Sir John Sinclair waived the question of form ; and Mr. Pitt observed that, on every ground of policy, he felt it to be his duty to bring forward and support this proposition.

Mr. Sheridan observed that, properly speaking, there were three parties to be considered in a loan. The chancellor of the exchequer, the subscribers to the loan, and the house of commons. Taking it in this view, the chancellor of the exchequer had deceived the original subscribers, and was now about to impose upon the house and defraud the public. With respect to the eighteen millions' loan, the subscribers might be taught to believe that there was not to be another loan, but the chancellor of the exchequer could not but know that there must be another loan, for at that very moment he knew there was a deficiency of seven millions. As to the merit of the subscribers to this loan, he was willing to give them full credit for their public spirit, but the measure of the chancellor of the exchequer made it a species of selfish public spirit, and a mercenary avaricious generosity. If they were left to bear the whole of this loss, they would be entitled to the characters of patriots ; but this measure took away all the grace of their public ardour. He observed also, that should it ever happen that this bargain might turn out profitable to the subscribers, by the increase of the funds, there were no provisions for the return of a single pound to the public of what was now proposed to be voted to those loyal money-lending gentlemen. Indeed, it was quite ridiculous to pronounce any panegyrics on the loyalty and patriotism of subscribers to loans. It was better, because honest, to confess that they come forward with a loan in expectation of profit. The minister knew this ; he had, by this loan, lost much of his credit with the moneyed men ; he wished to restore himself to their favour, and therefore he came now to the house to ask them to repair his credit out of the public purse. He had heard with surprise, for it was impossible

for him to attend the house yesterday, that many gentlemen had given their votes that this money should be raised upon the public, although a great part of it was to go into their own pockets, as subscribers to the loan. He said he could not conceive any thing more indecent or more indiscreet. At a time when the house of commons was extremely unpopular, and deserved to be so, for gentlemen thus to disgrace its proceedings by votes so mean and selfish, was actual madness. From ministers they expected nothing but deception. But if these proceedings were carried on, the house of commons would become more unpopular even than the ministers. From the one, the people expected only to be cajoled and plundered; but from the house they had expected at least some attention to their interests; they had been disappointed, however, in such expectations. This was, indeed, taking away the public odium from the minister, and fixing it upon the house of commons. Gentlemen should beware of doing this when they saw such bodies of men in a state of desperate insubordination, for they would increase the danger which now threatened the state, by rendering the house of commons despicable in the eyes of the people. There was one point more which he must press in the way of a question, and he expected an answer from the highest authority in that house. He wanted to know whether any member of that house ought to be permitted to vote on a question in which he was interested personally, and in a pecuniary sense? They could not even be examined as witnesses in such a case in a court of law, and they would be objected to by the same rule as jurors. He hoped these gentlemen would feel the delicacy of their present situation, and withdraw when the question was put; and if they did, he doubted very much that the minister would be successful upon the present motion.

A division took place; for the resolution 36; against it 35.

JUNE 2.

MUTINY IN THE NAVY.

Mr. Pitt moved, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message:

"To express to his Majesty the concern and indignation which we must feel, in common with his Majesty, at the heinous and criminal conduct of the crews of some of his Majesty's ships, notwithstanding the offer so repeatedly made to them

of his Majesty's most gracious pardon, and the proofs of the paternal regard of his Majesty, and of the liberality of parliament, which they have received in common with the rest of his Majesty's fleet :

" To assure his Majesty that we are ready and determined to afford to his Majesty our utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings, and to adopt every measure which can tend, at this conjuncture, to provide for the public security : with this view we shall proceed, without delay, in pursuance of the recommendation of his Majesty, to consider of such farther provision as it may be necessary to make for the more effectual prevention and punishment of all traitorous attempts to excite mutiny in any part of his Majesty's forces, or to withdraw them from their duty and allegiance, and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire :

" That we have the fullest reliance that all his Majesty's faithful subjects, from sentiments of loyalty and attachment to his Majesty, and a just anxiety for their dearest interests, will be eager to manifest, at so important a crisis, a full determination to contribute, on every occasion, their utmost exertions for the support of legal authority, the maintenance of peace and order, and the general protection and defence of his Majesty's kingdoms."

MR. SHERIDAN said that, whatever difference in political opinion might prevail among gentlemen in that house, they were now come to a time when his Majesty had an undoubted right to call upon all his subjects of every rank and description, for their zealous co-operation in maintaining the due execution of the laws, and in giving every possible efficiency to the measures of government. However justly it might be contended, that there existed strong grounds of reprehension and causes for future complaint against administration, yet such considerations were, in his opinion, at that moment completely out of the question ; and the house was now called upon to unite most earnestly with his Majesty against the fatal effects that might be produced by the perseverance in mutiny, and the dangerous disobedience of those ships mentioned in his Majesty's most gracious message. He once did intend to have submitted to the house a proposition, the efficacy of which appeared to his mind so powerful, that it would, if it had been adopted, have prevented the subject of the present discussion from taking place. But such a measure was now become useless ; and, from the events which had since happened, improper to be applied as a remedy. He lamented that the proceedings of the lords commissioners of the admiralty had not proved successful ; but he was induced to believe, that the failure arose, in some degree, from the manner in which they

were conducted. In a negotiation where you conciliate a little, and say you will conciliate no more, and then do grant more—when a board of admiralty is asked for and refused, and then a board of admiralty goes down ; then there is nothing that can be conceded as a grace which will be received as one, and nothing held out as a menace which will operate and be received as a menace. In alluding to the proposition which he meant to have submitted to the house, it was his intention to have moved for the appointment of a commission, composed of men of all parties and descriptions, who might, in their proceedings, have been empowered to examine the claims of the seamen, to have acceded to those that appeared just and well founded, and to have rejected those which were improper in their nature, and imprudent and dangerous to grant. Thus a commission, formed in the way which he wished, would have come at once to a definitive conclusion, by expressly stating, “ We have gone thus far in agreeing to your demands, and will go no farther ; any more concessions we conceive to be both dangerous and unjust.” Though he sincerely deplored that the proposition had not been carried into execution, he was ready to admit that it was now become useless. The fatal perseverance in the mutiny had placed the country in the situation described by the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt), and no person could feel more indignation against the foul incendiaries who had caused it, than himself. He was at first induced to think, that the mutineers had acted under the impulse of momentary delusion and mistake ; but their subsequent and continued conduct convinced him that something more than delusion operated on their minds, and that a rooted spirit of disobedience had taken the place of those manly and loyal sentiments with which they had been, on former occasions, constantly animated. If there was, indeed, a rot in the wooden walls of old England, our decay could not be very distant. The question, as it evidently appeared in his view, was not about this or that concession, but whether the country should be laid prostrate at the feet of France ? It was, in fact, a matter of no moment, whether it was laid prostrate at the feet of monarchical or republican France, for still the event would be equally fatal—equally destructive. The national commerce would necessarily prove the great object of the enemy’s vengeance, and those mistaken men, who might be instrumental in producing so dreadful

a crisis, would suffer most essentially in their dearest interests. Having said thus much with respect to the first part of the address, he felt himself called on to declare, that he could not give his consent to the latter part of it, for he was convinced, unless the house would make a necessary distinction between giving their firm and decided support to the executive government, against both foreign and domestic enemies, and identifying the present ministers with the government of the country, nothing solid or beneficial could be done for the public safety. He could not abstain from charging his Majesty's ministers with having produced, by their weak and imprudent conduct, the calamities in which the nation was involved, although he perfectly agreed with them in expressing his indignation on the subject under discussion; and when he came to consider the manner in which the treason and sedition bills were announced, somewhat of an equal pledge with the present was pressed upon the house. He was, consequently, justified in expressing his reluctance to assent to that part of the address which respected the intention of the criminal code, on the same grounds as he objected to pledge himself to agree to the two bills which had passed. He should consider himself bound to look with a very jealous eye on any measure of the legislature, which went to increase the number of sanguinary penal laws. It was necessary, first, to inquire and ascertain whether the present laws were deficient for the attainment of the ends proposed in the address; and he could not but recollect, with great regret, that an act somewhat similar in its nature to that proposed by the right hon. gentleman, had been passed in another country. If the bill went, therefore, to extend the sanguinary code of penal laws, without strong and sufficient grounds, he should consider himself warranted in withholding his assent to that part of the address, for that mode of legislation had been continually and systematically increased under the present administration: and what was to him a most important consideration, it had uniformly produced the very evil which it was intended to prevent. It was not requisite for him to reason at any length in support of that opinion, since facts daily confirmed it. He would ask, was not the present mutiny a proof that the spirit of sedition had increased, notwithstanding the bills which had been introduced by his Majesty's ministers? They had also thought proper to adopt another remedy, which

was conceived to be effectual. They had established the system of barracks, on which millions of the public money had been expended, and the house was then told, that such a system would keep the soldiers out of the way of seduction, and prevent them from being exposed to the intrigues of the emissaries of faction. The house was also told, that if the people could not be made dumb, the soldiers should be made deaf. There was, he maintained, no proof whatever before the house to show there was any deficiency in the existing laws to provide for the evil complained of; and until that proof was fairly made out, gentlemen could not, with any degree of consistency, pledge themselves to give their support to the bill. Knowing from experience, that the moment the legislature agreed to increase the code of sanguinary penal laws, they would also agree to increase the evil intended to be remedied, he could not give his assent to that part of the address. But as the right hon. gentleman wished so very much for unanimity in parliament, on a subject, he was ready to confess, of the most serious importance, he should not, for his part, interrupt this unanimity, and would, therefore, for the present, decline giving any vote at all.

The address was agreed to nem. con.

DECEMBER 14.

INCREASED ASSESSMENT OF TAXES.

Mr. Pitt moved, "That the bill for raising a sum for the supplies of the year, by an increased assessment of taxes, be read a second time."

MR. SHERIDAN said—Sir, when any stranger, or person who has been a long time absent, first enters a house of any establishment, it is the ordinary custom for the master of the house to do the ceremonies of the place, and welcome him on his arrival with some expression of pleasure or politeness, as a mark of hospitality. In this house, I know, sir, there can be no master—but if there were any, I am sure it is not the hon. gentleman (Mr. Yorke), who has taken upon himself, with such officious kindness, to act that part, and hail, with compliments so truly worthy of himself, the arrival of my right hon. friend (Mr. Fox) and myself. I cannot help thanking the hon. gentleman for his politeness, though I must acknowledge my gratitude would be of a warmer kind, if the hon. gentleman

had not, under form of predicting, taken upon him to prescribe what ought to be our conduct now that we have come. Whether we were or were not right in absenting ourselves, is a question, which, as was well remarked in a certain daily paper (*The Morning Chronicle*), cannot very properly come before the house, but is to rest with our consciences and feelings, and to be canvassed only by ourselves and our constituents. However, sir, when we did come down last Tuesday, with full expectation to find a full senate arrayed, anxiously hearing the discussion of this very important and momentous question, with the right hon. gentleman and his faithful friends and colleagues seated in their places, I found, not less to my surprise than disappointment, that only thirty-six members were then present, and that the house and the business was to be adjourned till a future day, for want of a sufficient number to constitute a house. The less, therefore, that is said upon gentlemen's absenting themselves, the better; I will, therefore, drop the sorry subject, and apply myself to superior matter.

My hon. friend (Mr. Nicholls) has been rebuked for introducing the question, whether the war was undertaken from necessity; and the noble lord who has taken upon himself the task of rebuking him, has said, that if any one differed from the opinion respecting the expediency and necessity of the war, which had been so unanimously declared by the house, or chose to give an opinion in contradiction to the unanimous resolutions of the house, he would have done it better by introducing it in the shape of a new question. Now, without disputing the noble lord's authority in this particular rule, I must take the liberty of denying the propriety of his application of it; for, according to my notions of the long-established privileges of the House of Commons of England, it is one of their leading rights, whenever they give and grant, to revise every part of the conduct of the ministers to whom they have entrusted, or are about to entrust, the disposal and expenditure of the public treasure. And, if this privilege exists in us, shall we, sir, be debarred of it by the management of his Majesty's ministers, coming forward on the first day of the session, and, with a trick, entrapping the house into an address unanimously declaratory of their approbation of those very ministers? I fancy not; for, if there be a time when, more than at any other, the good sense and feeling of the people

ought to be appealed to, it is when we put our hands into their pockets.

I will not now, sir, enter into a discussion of the question, whether the war was just, wise, or necessary; or unnecessary, impolitic, and wicked; for I hope to see the day, and that not a very distant one, when it will undergo full consideration—but in the meantime I hope it will not, on the other side, be insisted that peace is unattainable, and that we shall, on our part, be prevented from objecting that the war was unnecessary. An hon. gentleman on the other side has put the question, whether we will rather carry this measure through the house, and submit to its provisions, or leave it to the French to tear the money from our pockets? If, indeed, sir, this were the truth, and this the only alternative, I do hope, and I most sincerely believe, there is not a man in this house, or in this country, let the minister be who he might, that would hesitate to support him in the prosecution of the war with purse, hand, and heart. If there be any who might refuse, in such a cause, to expend the last shilling of his property, and shed the last drop of his blood, he is not to be found among those who, from the beginning, have opposed the war, as equally absurd and unjust. If France looks for friends and abettors here, they must look among the slaves who bow to power, and barter their principles for their private advantage, and not among the real friends of freedom.

But here, sir, let me be indulged in a few observations respecting the sincerity of his Majesty's ministers in their attempts at negotiation. For my part, when I look at the heap of papers that have been laid before the house on that subject, I can discover nothing in them but a trial of diplomatic skill—a contest of dexterity, who should best succeed in avoiding the imputation of duplicity, and most speciously impose on the credulity, and frustrate the expectations of Europe. Indeed, it is my opinion, that both parties were equally indisposed to peace. But admitting that such was the disposition of the French government—admitting that the French directory have behaved insultingly towards our ambassador—admitting that the whole of the French nation entertain an inveterate hatred and rancorous hostility against us, and that they are all actuated by the same hostile resolution at aiming at our destruction; must I, therefore, submit to the inference, that because pacific offers have been made

and rejected, and because ministers and their plenipotentiary representative have been disrespectfully treated by the French government, ministers are to stand proudly erect, and imperiously to demand the general concurrence of all those who first had thought proper to condemn and oppose their measures? That I and my friends have frequently urged the propriety and necessity of making pacific propositions to the enemy; that we have also pledged ourselves, should the enemy persevere in an obstinate refusal to listen to reasonable and adequate conditions, that we would support even the present administration, I am ready to confess; but that support it was our intention to afford them only as long as we thought it possible that such ministers might yet obtain a peace. That support we were disposed to lend them while our efforts were as yet seconded by powerful allies, and before the French nation had grasped at and attained their present enormous power; that pledge and promise were given while the Bank of England was yet in credit, and while the public faith remained inviolate. But from these propositions of peace, and from these pledges of support to the present ministers, we desisted last session; circumstances compelled us to adopt a contrary conduct—instead of pledging ourselves any longer to countenance the measures of ministers, an hon. friend of mine, a worthy alderman (Mr. Combe), brought forward a motion for an address to his Majesty, humbly beseeching him to remove his present ministers; and representing to his Majesty that, under their auspices, the attainment of peace was impossible; for that, instead of accelerating the return, they, on the contrary, stood directly in the way of peace; or, as the worthy alderman then very happily expressed it, that the blessings of peace, and the existence of the present ministry, were wholly incompatible; yet, after this direct avowal of our total distrust of their conduct, they now come forward and tell us that we must still give them our support; that parliament is still to countenance and defend the measures of the right hon. gentleman; when, in reality, the only countenance he looks for is, that we defend his existence in administration; he who has broke the bank and ruined the public credit,—though it was his proud boast, that his existence in power, and that of the prosperity of our finances, were involved in one and the same fate.

Nor am I backward, sir, also to declare, that it is not to curb

the ambition of the enemy, or to frustrate the views of French aggrandisement, that the war is now continued. The war, sir, is continued for the sole purpose of keeping nine worthless ministers in their places. When I profess this to be my opinion, I by no means intend anything personally disrespectful to them—their public conduct is all that I impeach; and the calamities that redound from it to the country. Indeed, I feel and know it, that as long as they remain in their present sentiments, there is no possibility of their obtaining peace: and those of them who possess a sound and sincere understanding, must be as sensible of their inability as I am. Why then will they persevere in a mercenary preference of their own interests to those of their country, convinced, as they must be, that the principles they have acted on, and which they still avow, must effectually prevent them from negotiating with success? And how is it possible they should ever treat with success, while they continue solemnly to hold out to the country, that the enjoyment of all that is dear to it, and that the existence of the British constitution, are inconsistent with the existence of the French republic?—that with the principles on which that republic is founded, none of the old-established forms and institutions of Europe—in a word, the order of the civilized world—can be reconciled? That, with a power so principled and disposed, they will accede to no terms, unless they be driven to it by the last extremity? From this unwise and inadvertent declaration, what will be the conclusion which the French government must naturally draw? Why, that we attempt a negotiation only because we are reduced to the very last extremity, as we were prepared to make every sacrifice sooner than attempt it. On the effects of such a conclusion, I must beg the house seriously to reflect. But what was the obstacle which impeded the progress, and finally broke off the first negotiation?—The obstacle publicly held out, was the possession of Belgium by the French. As long as France continued in the possession of that country, it was impossible to think of peace; not, however, that we deemed it necessary for the emperor, but rather for ourselves. We next gave in a project of our own; and we still continued to contend that the war originated in aggression on the part of the French; but here I must beg leave to say, that the drift of our own arguments, and the principles upon which we have proceeded, would prove the aggression to

be on our side. For after the repeated avowal of the high-minded principles upon which the right hon. gentleman entered into the war, and upon which his new allies are disposed to continue it, would they now say that they never would have intermeddled in the affairs of France, unless France had directly attacked us? If so, then, what becomes of the proud cause in which we thought ourselves to be engaged—the cause of religion, of humanity, of morality—the defence of civil rights, and of regular governments? The principles of the French republic are still said to be inimical to this cause; and against such principles we must all concur in continuing the war; then England must appear to be the aggressor, whether we persevere in the contest from the magnanimity of these principles, or from some other less glorious motive.

When, then, may we now expect to treat? If religion, morality, civilized government, &c. &c., invaluable objects, no doubt, are to be no longer contended for; are we to persist in the war for the possession of the Cape of Good Hope, the island of Ceylon, and Trincomalee? And are these the fair prizes to which we aspire, and to which the boasted defence of religion, morality, &c. must be sacrificed? Must we then, for all our indemnities, fall foul on our allies, and the concessions we contend for, be torn from the Dutch? If we persist in these demands, and the French continue to reject them, what then will remain to be done? Must we again rear the standard of morality and religion?—Is it then we are told that we must fight manfully? Would it not be better that those who would have us fight manfully, should manfully give up their places? And by what means do they endeavour to reconcile us to this hopeless contest? By craftily setting up our pride against our interest—by asking us, are we not ready to spend our last shilling, and our last drop of blood, sooner than permit the enemy to dictate to us the choice of our ministers? But this betrays only mean and little craft, and no soundness of judgment. Have not ministers themselves endeavoured to dictate to France the mode of government it should adopt? Have they even contented themselves with prescribing the principles it should act on? Have they not, moreover, insisted on their choice of persons and of forms? That such was their intention, appears from no less an authority than his Majesty's speech, wherein parliament is told, that when such

an order of things is established in France, as may enable their government to maintain the usual relations of peace and amity, then he would have no objections to treat with them. Is not this dictating to France the form of government she should embrace? And has not the directory a right to retort upon us, and say, that until they adopt the form of government we choose to prescribe, England will continue in her hostility to France; and there can be no solid and secure peace between the two nations, but at best an hollow truce, a mere suspension of arms? In this opinion my right hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham), if so I may presume to call him, must undoubtedly acquiesce: for according to him, a peace with France, while France continues to act on her present principles, would be far worse than anything that may arise from the continuance of the war. In this opinion, at least, I doubt not but he is sincere.

The people, we are told, must now submit to great burdens, and these burdens shall fall where property is great. But when they are called on to submit to great burdens, in my opinion, they should have great examples to encourage them. They are told, your private interest is nothing, the public interest must be all to you. But with what face can this language be held to them, either by the right hon. gentleman, or his new converts? For is there a man among them who has not betrayed more anxiety to secure his own individual job, at the expense of the country, than to contribute towards relieving the country from the burdens under which it groans? When we hear that in one office—that of the secretary at war—the clerks have fees and perquisites from the amount of £5000 to £18,000, some gentlemen may treat such perquisites as mere parings of cheese and ends of candles, but the public must wonder at the immense size of this consecrated cheese, and be dazzled with the light of those flaming tapers that thus blaze on the altar of corruption.

As to the measure more immediately before the house, I cannot but mark it with my strongest disapprobation; nor can I wait for its going into a committee before I express my opinion upon it; for no possible modification it can receive will be able to reconcile me to a measure, the principle of which I abhor. It is a measure that argues the grossest and most irrational violation and outrage of the regulation of all taxes; it runs foul on all the principles on which they can be raised; it is a penalty on

economy—a bounty on perjury—a libel on the public spirit—a commission of bankruptcy against the whole commercial part of the community. To show the impracticability of such a measure, I shall not now detain the house with any detail of argument; it stands sufficiently evidenced by the resolutions unanimously voted this day by the city of London, and which show that it is impossible for a very numerous class of householders ever to pay the tax, should the proposed mode of raising it be unfortunately passed into a law. It is a fact equally evident, that they are not able to pay the taxes now imposed upon them. Indeed, when so large a class of the community are unable to contribute to the exigencies of the state, we must be very near the end of our resources. But we are told, it will not affect the poorer descriptions of the people. No assertion can be more unfounded: for must it not touch all those profits arising from the luxuries in which the rich indulge? Must not the retrenchments of the wealthy trench on the means of subsistence of the poor? Yes—you may tell us, they are not taxed. The poor are not taxed, I allow you; but they will be starved; for they must be starved who derived their livelihood from the expenses of the great.

Numberless are the objections that may be urged to the principle of this bill; it goes to impose a tax on the expenditure, and not upon property. But I would agree with the right hon. gentleman, that property should be taxed, could he devise a criterion by which it could be accurately estimated; but surely he will not say, that carriages, horses, &c. are a perfect criterion of property; he has already admitted that they are not, and in this I also agree with him. But sure I am, that the ultimate operation of the present bill must tend to ferret out all property; but can this end be attained without the disclosure of the means of individuals? If such a system be, therefore, enforced, will it not go to erect in every parish a fiscal inquisition, to pry into the property of individuals, to ascertain their gains or their profits, and thus lay open and expose the improvement or decay of their circumstances? Will not such a system prove hostile and fatal to all industry, to all trade, and cut up by the roots every species of property? Look at the bill. What does it tell you? If you are over-rated, then you may appeal—and to whom? To your own neighbours and fellow-parishioners, if any description

of men can be found of so base a nature as to undertake an office so degrading. But, to what a trying situation must the person so appealing be exposed ! If the spies of government say they doubt his word, he is then to be examined upon oath ; and evidence may also be brought on oath to contradict his declaration. To what a situation, I say, is he then reduced ! Either he must incur the suspicion of being a perjured man, so strong are the temptations held out to him—or, if he makes a fair avowal of his circumstances, and says his income amounts to £200 (without taking into account the accidental circumstances that may impair it), should it come to be impaired, and the next year amount but to £150—either he must appeal, and divulge the decay of his circumstances, or he must hold up a false front to those with whom he deals ; and, should he fail, be accused of having held out false pretences, and have upheld his credit by fraud. If he comes forward, and makes this discovery of his situation, he is accessary to his own ruin ; and, if he shrinks from this discovery, he may forfeit his character for integrity. Upon the whole, if you follow up the principle, you must get at all actual property. To this it must ultimately go : but then it would be found a mean and narrow principle, and principally arising from narrow prejudices. If you attempt to call on the highly opulent, whose income may exceed £20,000 per annum, but who spend comparatively little, how are you to ascertain the proportion they should pay ? It cannot be done ; and if it could, the attempt would be impolitic and unjust. The right hon. gentleman has said, that he wished he could get at the hoards of the miser ; that misers ought not to be permitted to delight in pressing their bags under their pillows, without coming forward with their due proportion for the protection which the state gives to their treasure. If such treasures had never been actively employed in industrious commerce, it might be proper to derive a resource from them ; but who would toil for an income, if they were not permitted to spare or expend it, according to their own notions, and in the same spirit with which it was amassed ? Such a measure is sacred, and not to be touched. The revenue, it is true, depends, in a great measure, on the liberal, or rather prodigal, expenditure of the opulent ; but if there is permitted to be no saving, and all must spend to a proportionate extent, then you enforce a maxim destructive of the vital principle of all in-

dustry and prosperity. To the sacred principle of saving, I cannot but profess myself a friend, though the habits of my own life have been little regulated on it; and to encroach on this sacred principle, will be utterly to extinguish the spirit which enlivens industry, and from which all private and public wealth can alone be derived. However the right hon. gentleman may be disposed, from the general opposition with which he sees the country receive his proposal, to give a variety of modifications to it, there is no possible modification which can reconcile me to its adoption.

The house divided; for the second reading 175; against it 50.

JANUARY 4, 1798.

INCREASED ASSESSMENT OF TAXES.

The order of the day for the third reading of this bill was read.

MR. SHERIDAN rose and said, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Martin) who has just sat down, has called for more explanations of what other gentlemen have advanced than I ever recollect to have heard in this house. In candour I must conclude that the hon. gentleman really wanted information upon the points which he affected not to understand; and that where he did misunderstand or mistake the arguments of others, he did not mean to be guilty of wilful misrepresentation. The speech of the hon. gentleman, however, called upon so many members to explain the points upon which he has commented, that I have been under the necessity to give way to them. I now rise, thus early in the debate, and I feel some satisfaction in reflecting that the adjournment which has taken place gives me an opportunity of presenting myself when the attention of the house was awake, because, had I proceeded last night, I might have found the hon. gentleman (Mr. Martin) wearied and exhausted, and disposed, perhaps, to give me a hint to sit down before I had finished my argument. I have listened to the speech of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Perceval); a speech of great talent, great ingenuity, and considerable vehemence. The sentiments which it contains seemed to be so much in unison with the feelings of those around him, that I flatter myself that the approbation with which it has been received may contribute to shorten the debate, and to supersede the necessity of making long speeches from that side of the

house. It was remarkable, however, that the hon. gentleman, amidst a variety of matter on which he descanted, cautiously abstained from touching upon the real question before the house. Many of the topics which he brought forward, I am ready to admit, were fairly introduced, and perfectly regular in parliamentary debate. While I admit the right of the hon. gentleman to argue the subject in his own way, it perhaps might have been better had he altogether abstained from certain points; or, to use a phrase which has become very fashionable since the introduction of the present bill, had he modified his attack upon my right hon. friend. The hon. gentleman never attempted to show that the right hon. gentleman below him was the fittest person to administer the affairs of this country, that he was the ablest minister for the conduct of war, and the most proper person to negotiate with success. The whole scope of his speech was merely to show that the right hon. gentleman was placed in the revenue to bar my right hon. friend, as if it necessarily followed that he alone could be the successor of the present minister. Supposing, as he did, for the sake of argument, that my right hon. friend was qualified to negotiate with a better prospect of success than the chancellor of the exchequer, he said it would be incumbent upon the house, as a preliminary step, to treat with their negotiator. He thought that my right hon. friend could not be invested with that character without danger to the country. What were the grounds upon which this assertion was founded? He accuses my right hon. friend of having considered men as innocent who were acquitted by the verdict of a jury, and having argued upon this acquittal, that there was no proof of the conspiracy of which they were accused. He accuses him of having said, on the discussion to the treason and sedition bills, that resistance would be a question, not of morality, but of prudence. Above all, he founded his apprehension upon words which he supposes to have been lately used by my right hon. friend, that he would take no share in any administration without a total, fundamental, and radical reform. The hon. gentleman has made a very pretty play upon these words. I cannot but suspect, however, that the hon. gentleman, who has been celebrated for epigram, has put these words into the mouth of my right hon. friend, merely for the sake of the point with which he has contrasted them. He finds out that the reform so broadly

stated will not be a total reform; that the fundamental reform will not touch the foundation; and that the radical reform will be confined to the branches without descending to the root. This epigrammatic wit, however, is founded entirely upon the words which the hon. gentleman has purposely added to the expression to which he alludes. They were not used by my right hon. friend. The expression he employed, and which has become more conspicuous from its being made the subject of particular thanks in certain resolutions lately advertised, was that he would take no share in any administration, without a radical reform in the representation, and of the abuses of the present system. Such was the expression of my right hon. friend, and the words which the hon. gentleman has added into the bargain, were merely introduced to point a sentence, and to enliven his speech. The hon. gentleman considers the conduct of those whom he represents as unfit successors to the present men in power, as calculated to encourage the jacobins, and to forward the views of the French. These certainly are formidable evils, but the hon. gentleman quickly discovers some ground of consolation amidst the dangers which he apprehends. He thinks that my right hon. friend would retract the declarations he has made, that he would renounce the principles he has avowed, and that, in office, he would not act upon the professions he held before he came into power. On what part of the conduct of my right hon. friend he founds this assertion, I am at a loss to conjecture. What are the professions made when out of office which in power he has belied? True it is, that such conduct is not unusual with statesmen. True it is, that there have been men who have forfeited such pledges; who have said that there could be no salvation for this country without a radical reform (for this, beyond dispute, was the expression of the right hon. gentleman opposite); who have maintained that no honest man could undertake the administration of this country without that reform; and have, like him, abandoned the words and principles they once held, and resisted, by all the power of corruption, the cause which they laboured to promote. With the right hon. gentleman, the type and image of apostacy before his eyes, it perhaps was natural that the hon. gentleman should consider professions as made only to be renounced. When he reflected that the present minister had not only abandoned the principles

he professed, and violated the faith he pledged to the public, but had become the most zealous persecutor of those whom he had convinced by his arguments, and influenced by his example, there was no wonder that he should distrust professions, and ascribe but little sincerity to the declarations of statesmen. The hon. gentleman apprehends that many dreadful consequences would ensue were this radical reform to be carried into effect. What that radical change of system is to be, the hon. gentleman professes to be ignorant. For my own part I can say, that no man can be more decidedly hostile than I am, to any change of system that could lead to a change of the ancient established constitution of this government. But I will tell the hon. gentleman what has been the consequence of that change of system, which has been introduced into the constitution of this country. If any minister of brilliant talents, of splendid endowments, but actuated by principles of the most boundless and colossal ambition, raised up by influence, supported by corruption, should set at nought the rules of parliament, violate the act of appropriation, raise money without the authority of this house, and send it out of the country without the consent of parliament; if he has transgressed the constitution with impunity, if his criminality is suffered to pass even without rebuke—this is nothing less than a radical change of system. If by his folly and incapacity he has raised discontents—if by the burdens which he has imposed to support an impolitic and ruinous system, he has alienated the minds of the people from his government—if to suppress the opposition which such a state of things must naturally produce, he has had recourse to military force, and covered the country with barracks, in defiance of the constitution—such practices constitute a radical change of system. If he has distinguished his administration by severity unknown to the laws of this country—if he has introduced new codes of treason and sedition—if he has doomed men of talents to the horrors of transportation, the victims of harsh and rigorous sentences—if he has laboured to vilify and to libel the conduct of juries—such proceedings originate in a radical change of system. If he has used the royal prerogative in the creation of peers, not to reward merit, but converted the peerage into the regular price of base and servile support—if he has carried this abuse so far that, were the indignant, insulted spirit of this nation roused at length

to demand justice on the crime of which he has been guilty, he would be tried in a house of peers, where the majority of the judges were created by himself—I will tell the hon. gentleman that such a state of things must have originated in a radical change of system. Would it not be right, then, to pull down that fabric of corruption, to recal the government to its original principles, and to re-establish the constitution upon its true basis? Will any set of men deny the necessity of a radical change of system by which these evils shall be corrected, but those who already share in its corruptions, or who, at some future period, expect to promote their personal interests by those very abuses which have exhausted the strength, and endangered the safety of their country?

So much, then, for what the hon. gentleman has said upon this subject. It must now be clear that no peace can be obtained. It was not even supposed by the friends of ministers that they were sincere in their attempts at peace till the last trial. Then I am rather inclined to give them credit for sincerity, though I can see that a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham) trembles at the very idea of peace with the French republic. The hon. gentleman, however, takes it for granted, that there can be no choice, but between the chancellor of the exchequer and my right hon. friend; on a former occasion, however, I stated, that any other set of men should try to negotiate peace with France, because any set of men must negotiate with a better prospect of success than the present ministers; it is not in nature, that the French can consider the right hon. gentleman capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with their government. They know that the hostile mind exists, that peace is not sought in the spirit of peace, that no real reconciliation is desired. Any peace that could be concluded I would consider as a false and hollow truce. It could not be a ground of security; it could not restore the blessings of peace. Upon the faith of it I could not consent to the reduction of a single man, in the military or naval establishment of this country. Jealousies and suspicions would poison all the advantages which a sincere peace could bestow. The French would feel that they furnished to the administration of this country the means of fomenting the dissensions in France from which they cherish the hope of re-establishing royalty; they would lay themselves open to those intrigues, and

to that corruption which have hitherto been employed to overthrow their new institutions. If the French directory could encourage or agree to such an insidious truce, and expose the government which they administer to such attacks, as in this way it would sustain, they would be guilty of treason to their country. But it is impossible they could risk such dangers. It is impossible that they could stake their existence on the hollow and deceitful peace which the present minister could offer.

The hon. gentleman then cannot say, that there is no alternative between those who are in power, and those he points out as their successors. From different men and different measures, hopes of peace might be derived. But it is said that my right hon. friend, and those who act with him, are co-operating with the French; and what is the proof of this assertion? Why the French say so! This, indeed, is a curious mode of proving the fact. It would, indeed, be a hard rule, if what the enemy say of what is done by any members of the British parliament, was to be the standard by which they are to be judged. We are not to be tried by what we have said, by the measures we have recommended, by the whole of our conduct, and by our own professions, but by the opinion which the enemy may think proper to express. But how then do we co-operate with the enemy? We are friends to reform; a phrase which, it seems, is henceforth to be deemed synonymous with revolution. But how is this reform, from which such dreadful consequences are apprehended, to be introduced, even were my right hon. friend to support it when in office? Will not the right hon. gentleman be still ready to oppose it? The hon. gentleman either thinks that my hon. friend, when minister, will have in favour of reform that corruption, that influence, those titles, those jobs and contracts, by which it is now opposed; or he thinks that parliament being dissolved, that corruption and influence will be employed to induce the people to choose representatives favourable to the cause of reform. What do these arguments prove but the necessity of a reform? They prove that the pretended representation of the country is in the hands of the crown, to be moulded at the will of the minister, and thus furnishes the most powerful motive to remove the causes by which this corruption is maintained.

Having made these remarks upon the topics introduced by the hon. gentleman, I shall next say a few words upon some

things which fell from a noble lord (Hawkesbury) in yesterday's debate. The noble lord says, "that those who oppose all supply ought to have made that opposition when the supply was voted." For my own part, I am not against all supply, though I am not sure that a different conduct would be fully as proper. But, in a constitutional view, nothing can be more parliamentary than to refuse voting supply. It is fair to infer that, if ministers have not the confidence of this house, the refusal of supplies would be attended with the immediate resignation of those ministers. Certainly, it is not the intention of any man that the army or navy should be disbanded, and the country laid at the feet of the enemy. Such an alternative does not follow from the refusal of supplies. I confess, however, when I consider the desperate characters of the ministers in power, I think it would not be advisable to risk the attempts of which they might be guilty to retain their power, even in defiance of the constitutional privileges of this house. The noble lord however says, "that never was the naval superiority of this country more conspicuously displayed, never was our naval glory more highly exalted, than by the brilliant victories obtained during the present war." What, however, must be the nature of the war, when these splendid successes have not brought us nearer to the objects for which we engaged in the contest? What must be the importance of our acquisitions, when they are all to be given for peace? "How would France have stood had we not interfered?" says the noble lord. "What additional strength would she not have derived from those ships and those colonies of which she has been deprived by our success?" But let any man weigh the advantages we have derived from our success, with the sacrifices by which they have been purchased. Will any man say, that if this country had preserved a dignified neutrality, France, surrounded as she was by foreign enemies, would have still more oppressed and harassed her subjects to raise a naval power which no danger required? Contrary to all practice, to all experience of what has been considered as the object of continental diversion promoted by this country, would France, in the situation in which she was placed, have turned her attention to naval exertions? But we gained several ships by the victory of the 1st of June, by the capture of Toulon, by the acquisition of those charnel-houses in the West Indies, in which 50,000 men have been

lost to this country. Consider the price which has been paid for these successes. For these boasted successes, I will say, give me back the blood of Englishmen which has been shed in this fatal contest—give me back the £250,000,000 of debt which it has occasioned—give me back the honour of the country, which has been tarnished—give me back the credit of the country, which has been destroyed—give me back the solidity of the Bank of England, which has been overthrown—give me back the attachment of the people to their ancient constitution, which has been shaken by acts of oppression and tyrannical laws—give me back the kingdom of Ireland, the connection of which is endangered by a cruel and outrageous system of military coercion—give me back that pledge of eternal war which must be attended with inevitable ruin! Put what we have lost into the scale against what we have gained, and say if the price exceeds the value of the object. But even all these advantages, we are told, may be given up for peace. Surely, then, a person of the noble lord's abilities can never consider these objects as acquisition, which are to be given up for peace, and leave us without a compensation for all the sacrifices which we have made for their attainment. The noble lord says, "that the value of the West India Islands taken from the enemy, must be estimated in relation to our own." By the offensive measures against the former, the latter were preserved. If this be the case, then, when we give up the islands we have conquered, we give up our own islands, and abandon the security by which they are held. Such are the acquisitions which we have made at the expense of so much blood and treasure.

With regard to the continental war, the noble lord says, "that we had done our duty;" but he now discover, that our allies were guilty of every error, and all of them were destitute of common honesty. After some years' experience of the conduct of our allies, and of the principles by which they were guided, the noble lord could vote for giving two millions to one of them! Even this ally, the theme of so much panegyric, in whose success it was said that every peasant in this country was interested, in whose glory every Englishmen partook, is now comprehended in the general charge of the noble lord against the continental members of the confederacy. But, in the prosecution of their views of personal interest and aggrandizement, they took the

example from the conduct of this country. When they found the hypocritical pretences of religion, morality, and social order belied by our eagerness to seize upon every island, to plunder every possession which was exposed to our power, they began to entertain similar views, and to be actuated by the same motives. Those who would succeed ministers, it is said, however, are connected with Jacobins. Who are they who are connected with the Jacobins? Would it be the same thing to entrust the administration of affairs in the hands of those who oppose ministers, as if the Whigs, in 1745, had resigned the state into the hands of the Tories? The latter were avowedly desirous to alter the succession; but will gentlemen seriously say, that they believe that those whom they represent as the only rivals of the present ministers, are leagued with any faction to alter the constitution of this country, in the same manner as the Jacobites, in the year 1745, were hostile to the existing establishment?

Availing myself of the latitude of reply upon the general topics brought forward by those who have spoken upon anything but the question before the house, I shall now proceed to make some remarks on the speech of a learned doctor who spoke last night. Having come to this house several hours after the debate had begun, and finding that the gentlemen who spoke, after I came in, confined themselves very little to the discussion of the present measure, I was obliged to take it for granted, the particular question before the house had been very fully discussed in the speeches which were made before my arrival. The learned doctor to whom I have alluded, perhaps, may not remember that he spoke at all. A wise man, it is said, doubts of everything; and the learned doctor seemed to carry his scepticism a great way, for at the commencement of his speech he doubted whether he was speaking. I remember the words with which he began were, "Sir, in rising to address myself to you on the present occasion, if I have risen." If the learned gentleman still doubts whether he spoke at all, I can assure him that he made a very ingenious, a very elaborate, and certainly a long speech upon a variety of topics, without speaking at all to the bill before the house; and, if he doubts my authority, any other gentleman may probably give him the same assurance. The learned gentleman went into a wide view of Roman history, and told us, upon the authority of Scipio, that we had little to dread

from the threatened invasion of the enemy, because they must conquer us before we could conquer them. What would the lord mayor and aldermen of London say, if the learned gentleman were to tell them, when Buonaparte was encamped at Blackheath, that they need be under no apprehension; that, before he could advance to burn the city of London, Lord Hawkesbury was marching to lay Paris in ashes? I should like to see the faces of the mercantile world, when they were informed, on the authority of Scipio, that they could not be safe till the enemy were at the gates of the metropolis, and that they could not hope for a successful termination of the contest, till they had been first conquered! In the representation of the conduct of Hanno, at Carthage, by whose exertions the supplies were refused to Hannibal, the learned doctor did not do justice to Hanno. At the same time it is to be observed, that he said not a word of the striking difference between Hanno the Carthaginian, and the Hanno whom he insinuated to be in the British senate. Hanno succeeded in keeping back the supplies. But has the British Hanno ever been able to prevail upon the senate to refuse supplies? has he unnerved the vigour of our exertions? has he checked the career of success? has he suspended our victorious arms in the moment of triumph? On the contrary, has not the minister received supplies with unexampled profusion? has he not been allowed to employ them as he thought proper? has he ever been rebuked for misapplication? has his misconduct ever been the subject even of inquiry? Hannibal, too, was a young man—*flagrantem cupidine regni*. The argument of Hanno was, “I hear of the victories of Hannibal, but I hear of no advantage which they produce to Carthage.” Every victory is followed by fresh demands and new requisitions. The continuance of the war, therefore, must prove ruinous to Carthage. The affairs of the Carthaginians afterwards miscarried. Hannibal afterwards laughed at his countrymen. But what did he laugh at? He laughed at those men who affected to be dissatisfied with the terms of peace, without considering in whose hands they had left the conduct of the war. In similar circumstances, any man might, perhaps, smile like Hannibal to see the people of this country discontented with the terms of peace, when it was remembered that the war was prosecuted under the auspices of the present ministers.

I cannot refrain, however, from expressing my astonishment, that a grave personage like the learned gentleman, a member of the gravest profession which this house contains, should bring forward all his school-boy politics to evince the propriety of invading France. The learned gentleman, perhaps, thinks that it falls to his share to support in this house the opinions of a man of much greater talents, of much higher endowments—the late Mr. Burke, whose name ought never to be mentioned but with respect. He thinks, perhaps, that he is the executor of that great man's principles; that he is called upon to administer to his fury without possessing a single spark of his fire. I regret that any gentleman should conceive himself the representative of the violent and extravagant declamations, which so fatally were received in this house with so much approbation, and which have been attended with such lamentable consequences to this country and to Europe.

The frivolous school-boy topics, for such they are, upon which the learned gentleman proposes to model our conduct, have, indeed, no similarity to the circumstances in which we are placed. When he desires to imitate the conduct of the Romans, does he remember that the Romans were a people inured to war and to hardships? Does he mean to compare a commercial country like Great Britain with a warlike people like the Romans, or to point out similar rules of policy for the guidance of our conduct? Had Rome the debt by which this country is borne down? Had Rome the bulwark of a navy supported by commerce? Would sacking that capital have given a death to that credit, by which alone we can subsist as a nation? If the arguments of the learned gentleman could even produce the effect which he desires, the event would not furnish a subject for the moralist and the historian, but the fate which would await the right hon. gentleman, if he was seduced by such councils, might be expressed in the language of the poet—

“I demens curre per Alpes,

Ut pueris placeas et declamatio fias.”

Posterity would brand his name in the same manner, furnishing, in his destruction only, the subject of panegyric to school-boy politicians, and a speech to a grave doctor learned in the law.

The learned gentleman, amidst all his topics of argument, said nothing as to the nature of the bill before the house. If,

after the deviations which the course of the debate has taken, I may venture to take that liberty without being called to order, I shall now say a few words to the question. It has been asked, do those who oppose this measure admit the principle, or can they produce anything better? Certainly no person is bound to propose a measure of his own when he rises to oppose that of the chancellor of the exchequer; yet, in such a crisis as the present, it would be unmanly to withhold any ideas which we can contribute, or any of the sentiments we entertain. I then say that the only mode by which any sum like that required can be raised, is by a loan, the interest of which is to be paid by taxes, or voluntary contribution, with a sinking fund for the extinction of the debt. This is the true principle by which money can be raised in this country. Suppose it is impossible to borrow; in such a state of things this country is ruined. If government cannot borrow, the subject cannot give. I am very far from wishing to inculcate despair. If I really entertained such a sentiment, I should wish to disguise it even from myself. But we may yet borrow. How then are the funds to be raised to that state at which it may be convenient to borrow? It must be done by abandoning the system in which we have proceeded—by retrenchment in the public expense. If public spirit does exist, voluntary subscriptions may afford some aid; but of this, I confess, I am not very sanguine. Above all, however, it is necessary to restore the bank to its former credit, to prevent any stipulation being made to prevent it from paying its just debts, and to restore to the country the blessings of peace. As to the present measure, it must end in forced contribution of income by forced disclosure, a thing utterly irreconcilable to the spirit of a free and commercial country. If assessors were to be appointed, arbitrarily to make assessments of the income of every individual, which, from the surveys already made by the collectors of the income of individuals, seems to be the design of ministers, such a mode of proceeding would be a better criterion than the assessed taxes. In my mind, no criterion at all, however good it may be thought, can render the principle tolerable. Those who, from the criterion taken up by the minister this year, have been caught, will be careful in future to avoid any external symptoms by which, on any future occasion, they might be assessed. It will occasion universal retrenchment, and, conse-

quently, injure the revenue by destroying consumption. The effect of this system of retrenchment will diminish the public revenue by at least two millions. An arbitrary assessment would be better than that taken on any criterion, because the former would make it indifferent to the person contributing, whether he spent all his income or not; while the latter would induce him to avoid every appearance that could be made the future standard of contribution. A coachmaker, in Long-acre, would do wisely, if he could, to give at once a hundred pounds, than a much smaller sum which deprived him of his customers. In the same manner the watchmakers. Their employment was not taxed, because that would seem to tax ingenious mechanics; but those who wore watches were taxed, and many industrious men were reduced to the most deplorable wretchedness. The whole system and principle of the measure, appears utterly irreconcilable with every wise and just scheme of taxation.

What substitute then is to be taken? There are but three ways in which this sum can be raised within the year—either by voluntary contributions, by increasing the existing taxes, or by a forced loan; and of these three the present measure is the worst. Might not the whole of the plan be postponed, except that which provides for voluntary contributions? And I am sure, for one, I have no objection to read the bill, in that case, three times in one day, that we may try this experiment. With this bill hanging over us, such contributions could not be called voluntary, for no man could hesitate, in point of prudence, to pay the full amount of what he would be obliged to pay, rather than be made to contribute on the valuation of income taken from any visible symptoms. I am not very sanguine of the success of voluntary contributions, without some such compulsion. From the highest to the lowest of those connected with the government, there has been no disposition to give up anything: there has been no example to the people of this spirit of sacrifice. It is not easy to encourage individuals in the habits of acquisition, and the spirit of liberality towards the government. If a Bengal memshi, or a Chinese mandarin, were to be informed that £400,000,000 had been lent to the government by individuals; that a race was run by the competitors for the preference; that men contended about the subdivision of the portions, and parcelled out the parts among a crowd of friends, he would be ready to exclaim, “O

magnanimous, O invincible people !” Were he again to be told that the views which actuated the lenders were selfish ; that their profits were usurious ; that loyalty-loan holders had besieged that house for indemnification for the loss sustained on a bargain, he would exclaim, “ O wretched, O undone people !” It is by addressing the interest of this body of men, however, that the accommodation of the government can be secured ; and how is the credit of the country to be restored to that situation which will render it practicable ?

No disposition to contribute voluntarily has yet been displayed, from the very highest to the lowest ranks in the administration of government. While a teller of the exchequer receives £10,000 or £12,000 a year by the war, a near relation of that person contends that no peace ought to be made. But I am told that it is rude, uncourteous, and vulgar, to suppose that such a sum could influence the sentiments of any man. Rude, uncourteous, and vulgar as this is, the constitution is that rude, vulgar fellow, though the right hon. gentleman will flout and scorn those who suppose motives of this nature. The constitution is jealous of the effect of office, and even sends a man back to his constituents who accepts a situation to which important duties are attached. I have high authority, therefore, in supposing, that some bias may affect the mind where interest powerfully prompts a man to support any system of measures. I recollect, that at the end of the American war, when I was secretary to the treasury, the noble marquis, who is teller of the exchequer, wrote a letter to the commissioners of the treasury, requesting that the office might be placed in the reform, but saying at the same time, that his conscience would burn to think that he was profiting by the calamities of the country. This offer, however, was declined. Now, however, when the public exigencies so strongly demand some sacrifice, I am persuaded the noble marquis will not only be ready to forego a part of the profits of this office, but will bring up all the arrears that burn upon his conscience since the year 1783.

Last year, I took occasion to state that twenty-four millions would be necessary for the peace establishment of the country, taking the average peace establishment before the war at seventeen millions. Since that period, seven and a half millions of permanent taxes have been added, and it will require another

million and a half before the sum already expended and due can be provided. Thus, twenty-six millions must be raised, though peace was immediately to take place. When it is considered, however, what any new peace establishment must be ; when the system which is pursued in this country is taken into view ; when the manner in which Ireland is not governed, but ground down and oppressed ; when the hollow and deceitful nature of any peace with the right hon. gentleman is recollected, no man can think that two millions more, making twenty-eight millions, would be an extravagant computation as the amount of the permanent peace establishment. This is a tremendous and awful consideration ; but, if the country is to be saved, we must look our situation in the face, and make provision for the utmost extent of our difficulties.

While the bank continues in its present state of dependence on the minister, it is impossible to hope, however, that public credit can be restored, and the funds raised. Last year, much was said in the newspapers about the connection between the right hon. gentleman and the bank. It was said, that the banns had been forbid. The conduct of the chancellor of the exchequer showed, that he cultivated the connection on account of the lady's dowry, not for the comfort of her society. At first, the affair seemed to present the appearance of a penitent seduction, but now it has degenerated into a contented prohibition. The country wished to forgive the indiscretion, on the hopes of amendment. What has produced the infatuation it is not easy to conjecture, unless the right hon. gentleman had given the old lady love-powder. The hey-day of the blood was over, but the rankness of passion has not subsided. The dear deceiver is taken into favour, and the ruin he has occasioned is forgotten.

Upon the examination into the affairs of the bank, the standing committee of correspondence between the bank and the ministers pronounce, that there are sufficient means to pay all the private debts of the bank—but the minister interposes. The bank is placed in the situation of a person who can pay and will not. Of all situations, none could be more injurious to credit than this. When it is known that men are willing to pay, credit stretches a great way in favour of their ability ; but when a person is understood to be able to pay, and will not, the confidence on which credit must be founded is overthrown.

The manner in which the last report of the bank committee is drawn up, is likewise very curious. It is found there is enough of fund to pay the private creditors of the bank; but the chancellor of the exchequer, says "No!" and claps his lock and key on their coffers. Without meaning any quibble on the name of the honourable chairman of the committee, the conduct of the right hon. gentleman irresistibly reminds me of an old proverb. The report of the committee is very favourable, but still the bank must be kept under confinement. "Brag is a good dog," says the chancellor of the exchequer, "but Holdfast is a better," and the bank must be kept under the tutorage of the minister, till he finds it convenient for himself to set the directors at liberty. The advances made by the bank to government occasioned the first stoppage, and now three millions are again to be advanced without any security whatever. If the directors do not insist on some security for their repayment, they will be guilty of a gross breach of duty, and the most culpable neglect of the interest of their constituents. It seems that the bank is to be the new Temple of Janus—ever shut in time of war. While war continues we must be contented to view the meagre paper profile; nor will we be permitted to contemplate the golden bust till the return of peace. The French directory are thus to have the keys of the bank, which cannot be opened till they grant permission.

The right hon. gentleman says, "that the French aim their attacks against the credit of this country," and it is necessary to guard against their designs. The expression of the report is whimsical enough: it states, that the enemy design to attack us "by means of our credit." "No," says the chancellor of the exchequer, "I have taken care to take that weapon out of your hands; a dangerous weapon like this I certainly will not leave you to employ." It is said by some, that the conduct of those who oppose the minister encourages the French; while, on the contrary, the whole system of his administration tends to encourage their designs. He has taught them to believe that he governs the lower classes only by coercion, and the upper ranks by corruption. More is done by the language held by some gentlemen in this house, that it is necessary to confine the soldiers in barracks, to make them deaf if the people cannot be made dumb, than by any conduct which can be imputed to the

opposers of ministers. By showing that the minister can get no support unpurchased, the enemy are led to think that there is no public spirit in the country—that nothing can be done but by jobs, and titles, and pensions. What can they think of those who come forward under the pretence of public spirit, when they see that every man obtains his own private job as the reward of his ministerial devotion? They saw that disgrace after disgrace never diminished his power; that every successive attack on liberty was defended and supported by compliant majorities; that every new failure served only to rivet the attachment of his servile adherents. When they see the nation endure these things, can they conceive that it will be found to contain much public spirit to resist a foreign enemy? Beyond question great sacrifices must be made, whoever is minister; and, if the enemy persevere in their designs, resistance to invasion must be encouraged at every hazard. We must give up the idea, however, of doing this, and continuing in a state of luxury. Should it be necessary, we must show that we are ready to strip to the skin to maintain our independence and our liberties, in the same manner as they were compelled to struggle for their freedom. It is mere cant and delusion, to talk any longer of giving up a part to preserve the whole—that we must leave both our liberty and property unmortgaged to posterity. If I am called upon to pay a shilling to preserve a pound, this is intelligible; but if I am called upon twenty times successively for my shilling, it is ridiculous to tell me of giving up a part for the preservation of the whole. This will not do: and as a worthy baronet (Sir W. Pulteney) said on another occasion, “if it is so often repeated, it comes to be no joke.” This kind of paradoxical insult cannot long be endured. It will not do to tell us, that sending millions of money to Germany, for the defence of this country, is true economy; that to lop off the most valuable of our liberties, is to preserve the constitution; that not to pay its lawful creditors, is to support the credit of the bank; and to introduce a universal disclosure of income, is to protect property. This is the last stage of such delusion. The tricks have been too often repeated to elude the most inattentive observation. While the affairs of this country continue in the same hands, they cannot be administered wisely or well. The country cannot have confidence in a system, always unsuccessful, now hopeless; and the dismissal of

ministers must be the preliminary step to any vigour of system, any prospect of peace.

The house divided on the question for the third reading; ayes 196; noes 71.

APRIL 4.

BILL FOR PREVENTING THE MISCHIEFS ARISING FROM THE PRINTING AND PUBLISHING OF NEWSPAPERS BY PERSONS UNKNOWN, AND FOR REGULATING THEIR PRINTING AND PUBLICATION IN OTHER RESPECTS.

The attorney-general moved for leave to bring in this bill.

MR. SHERIDAN declared he would object to any kind of measure introduced by the learned gentleman, concerning what he terms restricting the license, and limiting within bounds, the press. Every allowance to which the hon. gentleman was entitled, upon the principle of candour, should be allowed him; but, in the instance before him, he had reason to suspect that very great latitude in that particular virtue could not be attributed to him. He was free to say, that in the bill, and in its tendency, lay concealed a design of destroying the liberty of the press altogether. This he considered but merely the preface to that which, probably, at no very distant period, was intended, namely, a general crush of every publication not exactly according with the party in power. He perceived that its purport had in view, not only all newspapers, but every other kind of periodical production that was published in the kingdom. He trusted it would have no consideration for party productions, but would comprehend every species, including even that recent publication called *The Anti-Jacobin*; a print that abounded with as much libellous matter as any he had heard of, and that too without a stamp. But he feared that, whatever species of publication this bill might include in its spirit, or even in its letter, an attorney-general would scarcely ever be found ready and desirous of prosecuting, for any slander which might issue from any print published, for the purpose of abusing those in opposition. His own experience furnished him with numberless documents to that effect. Did the hon. and learned gentleman, among all the libels that he saw and knew were ushered into the world against him and his friends, charging them with every political crime that ingenuity could devise, and every private error that depravity could

invent, to render men odious, or make them contemptible—did that learned gentleman, he would ask, ever make any effort even to threaten the delinquents for such misconduct with a legal prosecution? Certainly not. It was certain, however, that he was not a friend to prosecution. He was of opinion that the press should be unfettered; that its freedom should be, as indeed it was, commensurate with the freedom of the people and the well-being of a virtuous state; on that account, he thought that even an hundred libels had better be ushered into the world than one prosecution be instituted which might endanger the liberty of the press of this country. He remarked, that the hon. and learned gentleman who submitted this bill, stated a case in the course of his observations, insinuating that the produce to proprietors of newspapers, for scandal *not* published, was as profitable in the degree, and as great, as that which they obtained from scandal they disseminated. If that be the case, he would be glad to be informed what the proprietors of treasury newspapers received, for the abuse so abundantly lavished on opposition, and for that which they withheld from appearing against their own patrons? and whether, as all proprietors were to be punished alike, they were to be considered as proprietors, since the papers existed at their expense? He might readily answer both questions himself, were not the redundancy of the reply sufficiently obvious, from the consciousness that obtained on the other side of the house. Upon the whole, it was his determination, in whatever light he considered the intentions of the hon. gentleman who was about to introduce the bill, to oppose it; at present he considered it a dangerous innovation, as well upon the liberty of the individual, as on the liberty of the English press.

Mr. Pitt said, "He had read the paper alluded to, and observed how much satisfaction it afforded him. It certainly was stamped."

Mr. Sheridan replied, that the qualification that entitled it to the approbation of the right hon. gentleman, did not exactly correspond with what he should consider as recommending it. For his part, he made it a rule to read a paper and approve of it for its wit, not for its stamp.

Mr. Pitt defended the several clauses of the bill, &c.

Mr. Sheridan rose again.—He began by noticing the two speeches, or rather the explanation, and the subsequent speech

of the right hon. gentleman; and by expressing a hope that he might be indulged a little beyond the strict rule of explanation. In the first place, the right hon. gentleman had not stated quite fairly what he had advanced upon the subject of his indisposition to prosecutions. He never could be supposed to apply what he said to prosecutions, in which the safety of the state was concerned: but he did not see that this measure was calculated to give evidence against offending persons. Newspapers were not set up by men of large capital; and unless where they were set up under the countenance of government, they were commenced by twenty or thirty persons, who subscribed each £100. Now, he would ask, whether any gentleman would believe it possible that any person would purchase a share, when the publisher, editor, and printer, were held not to be alone responsible; and when every one proprietor was to be liable to fine and imprisonment? The learned gentleman, if that were the case, must see that there would be an end of that species of publication, and that none could be set up except under the connivance of government, and with the capital of the country. The right hon. gentleman had alluded, in the absence of a learned gentleman (Mr. Erskine), to whom the rights and liberties of the people owed more than to any lawyer whatever, to what that learned gentleman had said, and he had been pleased to call him the advocate and patron of all libels. This he did in his absence. Now he would venture to assert, that if the right hon. gentleman had said so much in any other place, he would himself have said what was a libel. But the questioning of the sincerity of the right hon. gentleman was stated to be a libel against the majesty of William Pitt. If that were the case, surely he might complain of some partiality in one person being prosecuted for making use of such an assertion, and another person being suffered to pass unnoticed; for, in the pamphlet published by his learned friend, there were great doubts expressed of the right hon. gentleman's sincerity; but the house had determined him to be sincere; did that alter the question? Would he permit him here to apply the doctrine of the gentleman who had introduced this measure? If a person had really doubts of his sincerity, according to that doctrine, it was no libel, for that gentleman had always submitted it to the jury whether the intention was mischievous or innocent. But this prosecution was commenced for entertaining doubts of the sin-

cerity of the last negotiation. Of the insincerity, however, of the former negotiation nobody had any doubts, and no prosecutions were instituted upon it.

The motion for leave to bring in the bill was put and agreed to.

APRIL 26.

TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE, AND PREPARATION FOR
INVASION.

A message was brought to the house from his Majesty, stating the advices he had received of great preparations for invading his dominions ; and that, in this design, the enemy was encouraged by the correspondence and communications of traitorous and disaffected persons and societies in this country. An address of thanks was moved by Mr. Dundas, seconded by Mr. Pitt, and carried nem. con. On this occasion,

MR. SHERIDAN said, it is impossible for any man who views the present situation of the country, and who views it in the same light as I do, to imagine that I now rise to oppose, in any shape or manner, the address which has just been presented to the house. Had I been present on a former occasion, when a bill for the better defence of the country was brought in by the right hon. secretary (Mr. Dundas), I most certainly would have given it my most cordial and zealous support ; and, in thus giving it all the countenance that I could lend to any measure, I would not consider the house as conferring any new or extraordinary power upon the crown, or anything more than is already vested by law in the royal prerogative. We all know that, in cases of great and alarming emergency, his Majesty is armed with the power of calling forth all the strength and energy of his subjects ; and if, in any ordinary riot and confusion, a constable may call for assistance from ever yone around him, can it properly be supposed that, on an occasion of extreme and general peril, his Majesty would be contented to be a mere looker-on ? And when his Majesty feels it necessary thus to arouse and exert all the strength and resources of his kingdom, however we may co-operate—what ever service we may afford on such an occasion—we only fulfil that duty which, by the oath of allegiance, we are bound to perform. But, however penetrated the country may be with the sense of the danger that awaits us, however ardent the spirit that now begins to arise, yet I cannot but breathe a wish that something were superadded by this house to kindle the

zeal, and animate the courage of the people; without which, I fear, neither can be warmed to that glow and ardour to which they should be raised on so trying an occasion—for it is no ordinary occasion, sir; the dangers that threaten us are of no ordinary magnitude; it is, therefore, no common spirit that can embolden us to encounter it. I rejoice most sincerely, indeed, to see this spirit now begin to arise; but, while I thus rejoice at beholding its first bursts, that joy is damped by observing the too general prevalence of a certain degree of supineness, a certain tardiness and hesitation to act, which I hope the cheering voice of this house will rouse and stimulate, or which its own activity will supply; and that any such tardiness or hesitation should prevail, must be surely matter of no small surprise—for does not the coming danger threaten us all? Are we not all interested in the issue of the event? Yet, as far as I can hear and observe, there are many who make this threatened invasion a mere topic of conversation, or idle discussion; they seem to treat it as a subject of amusement or curiosity, and appear eager for its arrival, as if they were to gaze on it as on some strange phenomenon, or as if they were to enjoy it as a mere show, and not tremble at it as a real peril.

Far, however, be it from me to suppose that this doubtful disposition, this absence of manly alacrity, proceeds from any such motive as disaffection, or from any sullen and ill-timed resentment of the wrongs and sufferings which the people may feel (and in my opinion very justly) against his Majesty's ministers—to whom, perhaps, they may as justly attribute them—but that want of spirit and alacrity which I lament, is occasioned by a sort of supineness, and a reluctance to believe the real danger of their situation, to which, therefore, they are not duly alive. An evident symptom of this supineness, and disbelief of the perils that hang over us, appears in the slow progress of the voluntary distributions; to this measure I have professed, and still profess, myself a friend—and the house will be pleased to recollect, that such were the sentiments I expressed, when I had the honour of making a motion for suspending the passing of the assessed tax bill. At that time I recommended the adoption of a measure similar to the voluntary contribution, and I recommended it as a temporary substitute for the assessed tax bill; and that principally because it could not fail to afford an opportunity of our

giving some practical pledge, some striking and unequivocal proof, that on one point, at least, we were all unanimous; to leave room for this manifestation of our humanity, I then moved that the assessed tax bill might be suspended for one month: my motion, as usual, was unsuccessful; but sincerely sorry do I feel that a learned friend of mine, who voted with me on that occasion, and who took a share in that debate, should since have reviled the measure of a voluntary contribution as a miserable expedient—a mere sending round a begging-box. He surely cannot have imagined, that when I endeavoured to suspend the assessed tax bill for a month, I was not equally sincere in my wishes to try the effect of the voluntary contribution, which I before recommended. What opinion could he, or the house, or myself, entertain of my consistency, if, after failing in my first object, I should immediately turn short, and join with them in reviling the very measure I before approved, and branding it as a begging-box business, which, however, I had confessed myself anxious to try as the best mode, in my opinion, of obtaining a practical pledge of our perfect unanimity, in providing every means of resistance to the insolent menaces and attempts of the enemy? Had I been in the house at the time the measure I proposed had been thus reviled, it would have grieved me to have heard it stigmatized in such language; indeed, I could have scarcely remained silent, and permitted it to pass unproved. Nor, when I hinted at the propriety of first trying a voluntary contribution, was it merely the money it might produce I had in view; it was the disposition and sentiments that should prompt and promote it, to which I was anxious to attend. I am likewise sorry that there are names which I do not yet behold in the list of the voluntary contribution; but while I express my regret at its not having obtained their countenance and encouragement, I by no means think it should be inferred that those who have not as yet subscribed, are less disposed than those who have, to concur in the preparation of those vigorous measures of defence, when they clearly see and fully feel their necessity. As to their apparent apathy, I do not feel the slightest apprehension. They only expect some more adequate cause for alarm, some more thorough conviction that the danger is at hand. For confident I am, that, as soon as one drop of English blood shall be shed by a Frenchman on English ground, the English valour will that mo-

ment rise to a pitch equal to what its most sanguine friends can expect, or its warmest admirers can desire ; it will then, doubtless, nerve our arms with a force which no impression from the enemy can withstand. But, although this extreme danger may be still distant and out of sight, we should not, therefore, be unprepared to meet it, or lulled into a fatal insensibility to all the dreadful calamities it will bring upon us. Of these calamities we do not seem to entertain a due sense of dread and horror ; but without retracting any one principle which I ever held or uttered, concerning the French republic, I am free to say, and am convinced of the truth of what I assert, that at no period of our history were we ever menaced with such a fate, nor at no period of either the French monarchy or French republic, had we more to dread from France than we have at the present moment ; for should the French now succeed in their projected invasion, our ruin would be irretrievable indeed. I do not, I say, retract the sentiments with which—while I deplore the scenes of blood which stained its glorious efforts to be free—I rejoiced at the establishment of the French republic ; but when I rejoiced at its establishment, and the downfall of despotic monarchy, I rejoiced at seeing it regain a due degree of freedom, and a due degree of strength. I by no means rejoice at the enormous power which it is now able to wield—a power which crushes under it the whold of the continental powers, and which has grown gigantic from the efforts which the alien powers exerted to oppose its infant liberty. It is from this increased power of France that England has more to dread than from the arms of any other nation ; and were France now again monarchical instead of republican, we should equally have to watch and to dread its ambitious encroachments, and its formidable attacks ; for, fully am I convinced that were the unfortunate Louis XVIII. to be now suddenly recalled by an almost unanimous wish of the French people ; were that unhappy prince to be unexpectedly restored, and that in a manner as unexpected as was our Charles II. ; were he, after being re-enthroned, to recal all his emigrant nobility, who have suffered most cruelly from the French revolution, convinced, I say, am I, that France would not abate one atom of her ambition, nor would she attempt less, but grasp at more than she had would lately acquired and achieved ; she would not remain satisfied with the Rhine for her barrier, with Holland and Italy for her vassals,

with the addition of all the Low Countries, and a domineering influence over the councils of Spain ; she would still remain restless and unsatisfied, until she had wrested from Great Britain the sovereignty of the seas. While I thus express my jealousy and dread of French ambition, I by no means depart from anything I formerly advanced about the French republic ; nor am I now more disposed than then to have recourse to the language of contumely and invective, which has unfortunately been but too much indulged in by certain gentlemen in this house, and which has lately disgraced the preamble to a bill. To make use of such language was surely neither politic nor wise ; nor could anything be more unbecoming and undignified, than the coarse expressions used, in the sister kingdom, by persons high in authority. I hope, therefore, we shall no longer hear of a Monster Hoche, or of this or of that ruffian general ; and I would beg leave not only to advise government to be more temperate and decorous in their language, when speaking of the French people and their commanders, but I would moreover wish they would pay them a sincere and solid compliment ; this sincere and solid compliment I would pay them, by saying and showing that we omit no human preparations which the heart and head of man can contrive and execute. This is the manner in which I would meet them ; and if we thus stand provided with everything that spirit and prudence can inspire and suggest, though it may be impossible for us to pronounce that they shall not subdue us, we may, at least, convince them that we are not to be despised.

If, then, they are to attempt to invade us, they will, no doubt, come furnished with flaming manifestoes. The directory may instruct their generals to make the fairest professions of how their army is to act ; but of these professions surely not one can be believed. Some, however, may deceive themselves, by supposing that the great Buonaparte—for he, we understand, is to be their general—that the victorious Buonaparte, I say, will have concerted with the directory, that he is not to tarnish his laurels, or sully his glory, by permitting his army to plunder our banks, to ruin our commerce, to enslave our people ; but that he is to come like a minister of grace, with no other purpose than to give peace to the cottager, to restore citizens to their rights, to establish real freedom, and a liberal and humane government. This, undoubtedly, were noble ; this were generous ; this, I had al-

most said, were god-like. But can there be supposed an Englishman so stupid, so besotted, so befooled, as to give a moment's credit to such ridiculous professions? Not that I deny but that a great republic may be actuated by these generous principles, and by a thirst of glory, merely for glory's sake. Such, I might be induced to believe, was the spirit which inspired the Romans, in the early and virtuous periods of their republic. They fought and conquered for the meed of warlike renown. Still, sooner would I believe that the Spartan heroes fought for fame only, and not for the plunder of wealth and luxuries, which they were more studious to exclude from, than to introduce into, the bosom of their republic. But far otherwise are we to interpret the objects that whet the valour, and stimulate the prowess, of modern republicans. Do we not see they have planted the tree of liberty in the garden of monarchy, where it still continues to produce the same rare and luxurious fruit? Do we not see the French republicans as eager as ever were the courtly friends of the monarchy, to collect from among the vanquished countries, and to accumulate, all the elegancies, all the monuments of the arts and sciences; determined to make their capital the luxurious mart and school for a subject and admiring world? It is not glory they seek for, they are already gorged with it; it is not territory they grasp at, they are already encumbered with the extent they have acquired. What, then, is their object? They come for what they really want: they come for ships, for commerce, for credit and for capital. Yes; they come for the sinews and the bones; for the marrow, and for the very heart's blood of Great Britain.

But let us now examine what we are to purchase at this price. It is natural for a merchant to look closely to the quality of the article which he is about to buy at a high rate. Liberty, it appears, is now their staple commodity; but should we not carefully attend, whether what they export be of the same kind with what they keep for their home consumption. Attend, I say, and examine how little of real liberty they themselves enjoy, who are so forward and prodigal in bestowing it on others. On this subject I do not touch as a matter of reproach. The unjust measures they have pursued, they may have pursued from necessity. If the majority of the French people are desirous and determined to continue a republican form of government, the

French directory must do what they can to secure the republic. This conduct, both prudence, policy, and a view to their own security, may dictate and enforce. But were they to perform the fair promises which they would fain hold out to us, they would then establish more liberty here than they themselves enjoy in France. Were they to leave us the trial by jury uninterrupted, and thus grant us a constitution more enviable than that in France, would not this be rearing a constitution in this country which would stand in glaring contrast to their own, a living and lasting reproach on their conduct towards their own country? Were such to be their conduct here, I will only say they must be madmen. Thus far have we viewed them with regard to the wisdom of their policy; let us now inspect the nature of their enmity. And here again I feel disinclined to enter on this subject with harshness or asperity; and I have only to regret that the French nation have, both generally and individually, been too frequently treated with scornful and ignominious language in this house. On the impropriety and impolicy of such coarse treatment I will not now be tempted to animadvert, neither will I stop to consider who has been the aggressor in the commencement of hostilities, or who was or was not sincere in attempts at pacification. What I regret is, that the more they have been abused, the more rancorous must be their resentment; and as to their intending to exhaust upon us the full extent of their vengeance, in that intention I give them credit for being sincere.

The next consideration, therefore, which naturally occurs, is how to secure a successful resistance to an enemy of this temper and disposition. I will not here require of government to lay aside their political prejudices or animosities; neither will I require of those who oppose them altogether to suspend theirs; but both must feel that this sacrifice is necessary, at least on one point, resistance to the enemy, and upon this subject, at least, I must entreat them to accord; for here it is necessary they should both act with one heart and one hand; if there be any who will say "oppose the French, when we have succeeded in removing the present ministers," to them I would say, "Sir, let us defer that for a moment; let us now oppose the enemy, and avert the storm, otherwise we shall not long have even ministers to combat and remove." If there are any who say, that "ministers have brought on us our present calamities, they ought, therefore, to

be first removed ;” I will grant them that there is justice and logic in the argument, but for its policy I am at a loss to discover. There are those who think the present ministers incapable, and that they ought, therefore, to be removed. Granted ; but if they cannot succeed in removing them, and if they be sincere in their opinion of the incapacity of ministers, how can they approve themselves sincere in their wish to resist the enemy, unless they contribute to aid and rectify the incapacity they complain of ? Indeed, there are some gentlemen who seemed to divide their enmity and opposition between the ministers and the French ; but must they not see that the inevitable consequence of this division must be the conquest of the country by the French ? And why do they thus hesitate about the side of the question they ought to take ? Can there be anything more childish than to say, “ I will wait until the enemy has landed ; and then I will resist them ;” as if preparation was now no essential part of effectual resistance. What more childish and ridiculous than to say, “ I will take a pistol and fire at them ? but I will not go the length of a musket ; no—I will attack them with my left, but I will not exert my right hand against them ;” all must unite, all must go every length against them, or there are no hopes ; and already, I say, I rejoice to see the necessary spirit begin to rise throughout the country and the metropolis ; and when on this side of the house we manifest this spirit, and forget all other motives to action, I trust the same sentiments will prevail on the other ; and that the offers we make sincerely, will there be accepted as unreluctantly. But now I must observe, that the defence of the country might be essentially contributed to by two very different classes of men ; the one composed of those sturdy hulking fellows, whom we daily see behind coaches, or following through the streets and squares their masters and mistresses, who may be ruminating in the mean time on the evils of an invasion ; to those I would entrust the defence of the capital, and would add to them the able-bodied men which the different offices, such, for example, as the fire-offices, might easily produce. His Majesty would be thus enabled to employ his more disciplined troops in a distant or more necessary service. There is another class I would also beg leave to allude to ; and those are young gentlemen of high rank, who are daily mounted on horses of high blood. They surely, at this perilous moment,

might be better employed : it would ill become me to erect myself into a rigid censor of amusement and dissipation. That line of argument would not exactly suit my own line of conduct, nor am I an enemy to their amusements—on the contrary ; but their mornings might now be more usefully employed ; they ought to be preparing for the task they may have to perform ; for sure I am they possess a spirit that will not permit them to skulk and hide from the storm ; they will never be seen a miserable train of emigrants wandering in a foreign land.

But amidst all these warlike preparations, the idea of peace should not be forgotten ; nor would I have that precious object remain unaccomplished, merely for a difference about some trifling point ; for my part, I feel a more eager desire for peace than ever ; for I by no means distrust the intrepidity and courage of my country. The death I fear it must die, is not a death from arms, but from the extent of the burdens under which it groans. But should our resources begin to fail, or even be exhausted, we should not for that be disheartened, and despair ; we should still retain the heart of a nation, and show the enemy we can be as desperate as they are ; that we can rob, plunder, ravage, and destroy, as effectually as they have done. Yes, I must repeat it ; the real fire and sword that must ravage this fair land, are the pen and power of the right hon. gentleman. His eloquence and influence will prove our bane. We should also beware of too proud a confidence in our strength. This strength must continually waste as our burdens continue to multiply, and multiply they must in proportion to our exigencies. But, however desirous I may be for peace, in order to avoid this pressure of taxes, I must warn the right hon. gentleman, that he must not think of treating for peace if the French should land. That last of humiliations would break, indeed, the spirit of the country ; it would break the heart of our navy. With this opinion I am glad the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) seems impressed ; but, if I am to speak out, I have also to tell him, that the want of confidence in public men has of late more enfeebled the nation than any other cause ; and this want of confidence has principally arisen from the secession of certain gentlemen, who have deserted the Whig party in order to creep into place, that they might better serve the cause of religion, morality, &c. as they would have believed, but whose real motive was their anxiety to

participate of place and power ; on them it is incumbent to repair the injury they have done to the public spirit, not only by co-operating in the general efforts for resistance, but in a more liberal and extensive sacrifice of the emoluments they enjoy, and which they were so eager to secure while they had nothing in their mouths but morality and civil order. As to any more coalitions, I shall never think of them with patience ; they have done nothing but mischief ; and, in my mind, much more than any party hostilities can produce : the country feels it, and justly abhors them ; and, indeed, it has been the misfortune of the country to have long been led by parties, and to look to this or that man as a head and a guide. I do not deny the importance and abilities of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt), neither, surely, am I insensible of the manly soul and mighty mind of my right hon. friend (Mr. Fox). But, in a country of more than 8,000,000 of inhabitants, and those of ardent hearts and enlightened understandings, if I am told there can be found but two men who can save it, I have only to say that such a country is not worth saving, and should be destroyed. But, thank Heaven, there is no such dearth amongst us of wise and able men, of men willing and prepared to save the country in a crisis like the present : let Englishmen but look to and rely upon themselves—their heart and spirit will then return, and arm but their hands, and then you will see if the British nation will tamely submit to be hustled out of its independence. Even were we all banished out of the country, there would still remain a sufficient number of men to conduct its affairs and preserve its glories, without expecting its salvation at the hands of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt), or my right hon. friend (Mr. Fox) ; or even from a noble lord in the other house, who has lately created so much expectation.

I am ashamed to say anything concerning myself, although it should be a very few words. I am sorry also, it is hardly possible for any man to speak in this house, and to obtain credit for speaking from a principle of public spirit ; that no man can oppose a minister without being accused of faction, and none, who usually opposed, can support a minister, or lend him assistance in anything, without being accused of doing so from interested motives. I am not such a coxcomb as to say, that it is of much importance what part I may take ; or that it is essential

that I should divide a little popularity, or some emolument with the ministers of the crown ; nor am I so vain as to imagine that my services might be solicited. Certainly they have not been. That might have arisen from want of importance in myself ; or from others, whom I have been in the general habit of opposing, conceiving that I was not likely either to give up my general sentiments, or my personal attachments ; however that may be, certain it is, they never have made any attempt to apply to me for my assistance. I think it right to declare, however, that my political enmity (private I have none) is irreconcilable to his Majesty's present ministers ; and my attachment to my right hon. friend, and to his political principles, is unaltered and unalterable ; that my eager desire to procure a reform in parliament, as well as a reform of a multiplicity of abuses ; to procure, if possible, indemnity for the past, and security against future abuses, is undiminished. These are points to which I have long since and often pledged myself. These are pledges which I shall never abandon. Let the world think of me what it pleases, I am conscious of the integrity of my principles. I feel a pride in avowing them ; and I should be the meanest and basest of mankind if I preferred some party principle, or some personal motive, either on account of myself or others, that might induce me to abandon my public sentiments. I will do all I can against the efforts of our foreign enemy. I say you have a right to call on all descriptions of men to do the same thing. Some distinction, however, ought to be made. There are many who have made fortunes by contracts and by various species of court favour and connections. There are others who lend the state most important and honourable assistance. What is bounty in the one, would be nothing but gratitude in the other, in coming forward to support the public cause at the present crisis. I call on those who have so long profited by court connections ; I call on the personal friends of the minister to come forward and assist the state at this trying moment. I call on those also that have been, on former occasions, loud for reform. I call on those who feel themselves pledged to bring the minister to account for his actions, to show that they are the real friends of their country in the hour of peril. They all know what I mean by this. I need not tell them that every measure which invigorates the spirit of the people, and strengthens the crown, to resist the ambition of

the enemy, and to relieve us from our present perilous condition has my cordial support, and ought to receive theirs.

Having said this, I ought also to say a few words on a subject which I have heard within a few moments; I mean that of an intention to take away one of the most valuable of the rights of the subject. That part of the address which I like the least, is that which relates to a supposed correspondence between our foreign enemies, and those who are alleged to be our domestic traitors. If there be such traitors among us, let the law pronounce upon them; but ministers must not expect inconsistencies from me; I cannot give my assent to an assertion of the existence of such a correspondence, or such a society of traitors, without proof. I say this the more readily, on remembering, that formerly I denied the existence of a plot which the minister alleged did exist, and the verdict of a jury afterwards negatived that conspiracy, and consequently supported what I said upon that subject. What plots there are, or whether there be any, I do not know; but, before I hear evidence, I cannot give an unqualified assistance to that part of the address. The minister must know, better than I can pretend to do, whether any such plots exist or not; but he will pardon me if I decline to take his word for their existence. That ministers should take this step, I own, appears to me alarming; it casts a kind of suspicion all over the country, and which, in my opinion, will operate as a check upon the otherwise rising spirit of the people. Gentlemen will easily understand what I allude to; but ministers will excuse me; they cannot have any support from me upon this subject—I mean the suspension of the Habeas-Corpus Act. On a former occasion I opposed that suspension; and now there is less evidence to support the necessity of it than then. If called upon to assent to that suspension, they must allow me to pause; for it is much too difficult for me to assent to such a measure without much better evidence than I have yet seen.

Another point is one of great importance, but on which I shall utter only a single sentence: it is the state of Ireland. I mean on some future day to bring forward a discussion of that subject. I only mention it now for the sake of observing, that part of the British empire, which was once one of the sinews of its strength, is now, alas! become a part of its weakness. The cause of that unhappy change I do not now pretend to explain; but let not

governors ever flatter themselves, that they ever, at any time, under any circumstances, lose the affections of the hearts of the people without some misrule on their parts. Upon that subject I do not pretend to say anything decisive now ; but I have thus introduced it, for the purpose of giving notice that I intend to enter hereafter upon its discussion.

BILL FOR SUSPENDING FOR A LIMITED TIME THE OPERATION
OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT.

MR. SHERIDAN expressed his entire disapprobation of the bill, and his wish that it had not been urged with such violent rapidity as marked its motion through the other house, and which he anticipated would also become its career through this house. The last great and best privilege was trial by jury : the efforts of any administration that checked its attributes, or diminished its virtues, was the death-blow to the vitality of constitutional liberty. This was a privilege which, of all others, he was most tenacious of, and which, of all others, was most valuable to the political eminence of Englishmen. He could not then permit the bill now proposed to pass through the house, without thus, in the most rigid, decided, and unqualified manner, giving it his most positive negative. He could not, when he lent his warmest aid in approbation of every measure to be adopted to resist the common enemy, at the same time, and the very same instant, give his approbation of a measure, the operation of which would retard, check, and damp that vigour requisite to meet and confound that common enemy ; to resist with effect the common enemy, there must be unanimity ; but the effect of this would be to sow discord, to excite murmurs, and to feed discontent. When a measure similar to this, on a former occasion, was introduced, he used the same arguments that he should apply now. He desired to have evidence before the house of the existence of treason, and of traitorous conspiracies, before he gave a ready acquiescence to that which, in its operation, involved so many. The measure now introduced required still more urgently the application of the same arguments. He, therefore, again required evidence of conspiring traitors, of treasonable correspondence, of seditious societies ; until these were adduced, he would never give his consent to the bill then before the house. He should consider himself performing but a lukewarm duty to his conscience, or to his country, if he did not express himself to

this effect ; but he should do a violence to both, if he did not resist it with every faculty which God and nature gave him to enjoy.

The right hon. gentleman opposite to him seemed to welcome his co-operation in the general system of national welfare, and to infer from thence, that he was to expect his support, thick and thin, of all his measures ; but he took occasion to remark, that as, in the general principle of united opposition to foreign invasion, he entertained but one and the same wish with that right hon. gentleman and the rest of his colleagues ; yet, in the specific transaction of his ministerial conduct, he never coincided with him, and never would. This he desired might be universally understood. He took occasion to remark that the period when this measure was before introduced, was when a set of persons were ready to be put upon their trial ; the same was precisely the case now. But, even at that period, there was more abundant reason for the house to adopt such a measure than at the present ; for at that time there was such evidence for their guide as the secret committees of the two houses of parliament had procured ; but now even that pretext is not forthcoming, nor a shadow of proof offered, that any kind of treason existed that could warrant the adoption of so violent a means to restrict the liberty of Englishmen. There was nothing good, nothing wise, nothing just or prudent in it, and nothing that could sanction for it his support. The right hon. gentleman, then, failing to adduce any evidence to authorise the suspension of the habeas corpus act, either at the former period to which he alluded, or now, it remained for him to inquire whether there existed any proof, or any demonstration, sufficient to supersede the necessity of suspending it at this time ? He had cause to believe he could produce argument to such an effect ; and, for that purpose, he had only to submit to the house the very reasoning used this day by that right hon. gentleman. He stated, in very glowing language, “ the prevalent spirit of opposition that reigned among the people of this country to French principles, their unanimity to resist French arms, and the universality of both opposition and resistance in maintaining, against all invaders, the inviolability of their constitution, their liberty, and laws.” He therefore confessed, when he heard such assertions issue from that right hon. gentleman, he could not but conceive and believe, that such a measure

as that submitted to the house was, if not nugatory, at least unnecessary. He desired to know where was the necessity of oppressing a willing people? By the declarations of the right hon. gentleman himself, unanimity prevailed; one sentiment, one spirit, one soul seemed to actuate the people, and he believed it. Then where exists the necessity of imposing upon them a law, which, if not oppressive, must be useless and unnecessary? For his part, as he could observe no proofs of its necessity, as he could find no reason for its utility, until he saw either, or both, it should have, in every stage, his negative.

Mr. Pitt having replied,

Mr. Sheridan said, he wished to act on principle, and not on confidence; the minister said he knew the existence of a conspiracy, and admitted that he (Mr. Sheridan) did not know it; how then could he vote for this measure otherwise than upon confidence? He was told, indeed, that the French themselves had published their intention of invading this country, and that they trusted to the aid of traitors here; he did not think that much credit was due to that assertion; for the French themselves had stated that they would be joined in this country by all the friends to parliamentary reform. Taking that as a specimen, either of their judgment or veracity, there did not seem to him to be much reliance due to either. Indeed, he thought the chancellor of the exchequer desired too much, in expecting him to have no will of his own, after he had assented to the motion for the address this day. He was most clearly of opinion that this country ought to be well prepared to meet the enemy—it ought also to convince the enemy it is prepared. That could be done only by raising the spirit of the British people, to show their dignity. In his opinion, to deprive them of so material a bulwark as the habeas corpus act, was not the way to do either; for such a measure would only spread discontent among themselves, damp their spirits, and lessen their dignity in the view of foreign nations.

The question was put that the bill be read a first time—ayes 183; noes 5.

MAY 5.

SOUTHWARK ASSOCIATION.

Mr. Tierney moved, "That this house will, upon this day sen'night, resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the manner in which the 'Act to enable his Majesty more effectually to provide for the defence and security of the realm during the present war, and for indemnifying persons who may suffer in their property by such measures as may be necessary for that purpose,' has been carried into effect in the county of Surrey."

Mr. Dundas spoke in opposition to the motion.

MR. SHERIDAN said, it had a little excited his surprise to hear the right hon. gentleman acknowledge the importance of the present question, and yet treat it as if it was of no importance at all. In my mind (said Mr. Sheridan), in point of real importance, as it connects itself with the best interests of the country, in a crisis avowedly of real danger, than the present, there could not have been brought forward a question more entitled to the candid, full, and deliberate consideration of this house. Yet so satisfied am I with the statements made by my hon. friend, and so ably has he supported those statements by his arguments—arguments which have scarce been combated, but certainly not refuted, that I should not have troubled the house at all, but from one observation made by the right hon. gentleman in the course of his speech. Sir, the right hon. gentleman has this evening told us, nay, he has asserted it broadly as a proposition which, indeed, he has offered to maintain, that there are in this country great numbers of seditious persons, who have formed themselves into societies under the specious title of reformers, but whose real object is to overturn the constitution by assisting the French, should they ever land in this country. This, sir, is, in truth, a very broad proposition; and, without intending anything ludicrous, I must confess its capacity was not a little enlarged by the tone and gesture in which it was delivered. But the right hon. gentleman cannot wonder if I deny assertions so generally made, and propositions so wide and unlimited in their scope. I am now told there are everywhere insidious lurking persons, who cherish sentiments hostile to the government. This is an accusation by no means new. It is, however, much too loose and vague to be regarded with complacency. I will admit that there may be in this country, as there ever will be in every country, a few, who, urged by I know not what spirit, a love of change—a pas-

sion probably once cherished by the right hon. gentleman himself—or from worse motives, desire the overthrow of the government. But, while I am far from doubting that there may be bad men, I hope and believe they are few. It is with them, perhaps, as with the grasshopper—they will make a noise, but have too much timidity ever to be seen. Only alarmists could apprehend danger from such men. But we have often before now heard it stated in language not less confident, that in every corner of the kingdom sedition and treason in some degree exist. This, sir, is a little unaccountable. If his Majesty's ministers have not been all along deceiving us, it is not easy to imagine how, in this crisis of their mighty power, a few obscure individuals could have become so formidable. Really there is, in these matters, something of the mysterious. A short time back, so much of the constitution was taken away to defend the rest ; and, for this proceeding, the reasons stated by ministers were, chiefly, that the societies were every day growing dangerous—that principles hostile to good order and morality were hourly gaining strength, and rapidly gaining on the individual mind. Strong measures were accordingly adopted ; and, until lately, we have been uniformly told, that the memorable treason and sedition bills had succeeded in effectually suppressing whatever of either existed in the country. But this night we are told, that not only has the distemper re-appeared, but treason and sedition are denounced to you ; and the right hon. gentleman has declared that they exist in a degree to damp the spirit and repress the ardour of the country.

Here Mr. Dundas said, he must have been much misunderstood. What he said was, that in consequence of many improper persons having made offers to serve and the appearance of a seditious faction, the spirits of the people, and of the associations would be damped, if the lords lieutenants of counties, or if his Majesty's ministers, accepted of such offers of service.

Mr. Sheridan then said, we have now had the right hon. gentleman's explanation ; and, I must say, that if the people, if the martial spirit of the associations, shall be damped by so small a number as the troop of seditionists are said to consist of, the country is indeed in danger, and our situation is bad beyond example. There is that, however, in the declared zeal and patriotism of the great body of the people, which must quiet every rational mind, and make the general scrutiny depend, as it ought, on the courage, the perseverance, the resources, and the unen-

cumbered strength of the country. Thus far I have endeavoured to obviate the effect of that discouraging proposition—that there exist at this moment vast and formidable bodies of men hostile to government, and united to accelerate its fall. But there is one expression which it is impossible I should be able to contemplate without anxiety, or bring forward to the recollection of the hon. gentleman without regret. The right hon. secretary has told us, that he regrets the circumstances which have obliged the officers of the crown to put off the state trials; and do but attend to the very mischievous reason he has assigned for his regret—that he could not lay before this house the proofs of the guilt of particular bodies, and of the existence of multiplied conspiracies. Sir, I am not one who has ever been unwilling to pay the tribute of applause justly due to an English jury; but, if ever anything could tend to influence a jury, it must be such an assertion as that of the right hon. gentleman. In the critical and awful situation of the persons in confinement at Maidstone, nothing can be more unkind, to say the least, than the using expressions towards them which may have a tendency to impress individual minds with an unfavourable opinion of their conduct. That principle of the law of England which holds a man to be innocent until he is found guilty by a jury of his peers, to my mind, conveys as sound and wise a maxim as ever was inculcated. Sir, it requires of us cautiously to avoid all occasions of expressing hastily, or in warmth, even doubts of the innocence of persons who may unfortunately stand accused of enormous crimes. If the right hon. gentleman had but given that principle of our law its full weight in his deliberations, if he had regarded anything that he owes to justice, he would not have made such a speech. But, sir, I can remember a period in our annals, characterised by circumstances not a little similar, and conduct very much like that of the present evening. The memorable epoch of the state trials is fresh in the recollection of gentlemen. To this I particularly allude. At that period, eventful enough, God knows, we were assured by the right hon. gentleman, and his friends near him, that the whole country was menaced, and in danger of being overrun by French principles, and the emissaries of the corresponding societies. I remember the proceedings in parliament in the committees that were held on this occasion. Then, sir, there were tremendous reports, whispers of dark and

insidious conspiracies, of treason, and every other monstrous crime that could interest or disquiet the mind. We were then presented with profiles, and drawings of pikes, and of male and female screws. It was then the general boast of ministers, that they possessed proofs of existing conspiracies; but they, at the same time, modestly told us, as has been insinuated this evening, they regretted, that while the trials were depending, they could not bring forward the proofs of existing conspiracies, of the treasonable mind within, and the corresponding danger from without. Happily, however, these auguries soon proved ill-founded, and the verdict of an English jury declared the innocence of the accused. I do not say that the right hon. gentleman opposite to me thinks much of the verdict of a jury; but it is no unimportant fact that the judge, who presided on that occasion, congratulated the jury on their verdict, and on the proofs that had been exhibited of those conspiracies, which once so much alarmed the public mind, being wholly without foundation, or only the chimerical offspring of a faction; men, without arms, amunition, or means of any kind, and even without zeal. Sir, I must think we are on the present occasion as little in danger of being overwhelmed with conspirators as we were then. But, though I think thus, the inference from the right hon. gentleman's observation must be obvious. It must be felt that, in substance, the right hon. gentleman had insinuated that the prisoners are guilty. I have no knowledge of any of the prisoners except Mr. O'Connor; but I, sir, regret that the trial at Maidstone was put off. I regret it for reasons very different, with feelings the reverse of those which appear to actuate the right hon. gentleman. I regret it, sir, because I am convinced Mr. Arthur O'Connor is not a traitor, and is incapable of acting hostilely against this country or its constitution. Having said this, I shall now take the liberty of making some observations on the question immediately before the house. The right hon. gentleman has assumed, as a general proposition, the discretion vested in lords lieutenants; but all servants are responsible for their conduct. The whole question is, therefore this,—“Has my hon. friend made out such a case as ought to induce this house to enter into the proposed inquiry, and as requires a justification of the conduct of Lord Onslow?” I think this case has been made out; but, so far from the right hon. gentleman meeting the question fairly, he has not in

any one instance attempted to discuss it. Instead of this, a great deal of the right hon. gentleman's speech was occupied with efforts to throw odium on the resolutions of the borough of Southwark, which all comes to this—"It is fit to tell the French, that England is not what England was?" But, sir, it was not necessary that these resolutions should ever have been passed, to give the French all the information on this subject they can desire. They cannot think it necessary to refer to the borough of Southwark to inform them, that we entered into the present war, strengthened by an alliance with almost every power in Europe; that we have lost our allies one by one, that Belgium is annexed to their republic, and that we have sustained great and grievous losses in the West Indies. It is complained of, that these resolutions have become too public, and they would find their way to France. Sir, I do not know that this will be the case; but I do know that if the declarations of the Borough Association reached France, no candid or intelligent Frenchman will doubt the determination of that portion of his Majesty's subjects to defend their country, and assert their rights against invaders of whatever description.

But it appears to me, that language such as that held by the right hon. gentleman, is every way unworthy of himself. At one time, the thirst was after unanimity; now, we are threatened with schisms; and if ever anything serious to this country should be the effect of party animosity, that right hon. gentleman, and those who like to vex and wound the spirit of individuals, will be alone to blame. It, indeed, is pretty evident, that no offer of service, no declared intention to support the executive government in the hour of peril, no oblivion of political enmity, will do, unless we come forward to declare the present war just and necessary, although we had in its commencement, and have uniformly since, opposed it as unjust and unnecessary; that we must deny all our cherished and oldest principles; acknowledge those ministers to have capacity, whose incapacity we always have deplored; in fine, unless we bring along with us a certificate of our capacity, it appears to be the determination of his Majesty's ministers that we shall not serve our country, or be found in its ranks, fighting its battles in the hour of danger. I do not state this on light grounds. In my neighbourhood, instances have occurred of conduct, on the part

of ministers, that warrant my conclusion. An hon. gentleman, a member of this house, than whom there is not a more loyal, gallant person in it, has made an offer of his services, but no notice has been taken of that offer. The whole of his political proscription can, therefore, only mean, that certain persons shall not be trusted with arms because they have opposed ministers. The right hon. gentleman says, that the resolutions of the inhabitants of the borough of Southwark tend only to invite the French to come and give them the fraternal hug. But so little do they express a desire to receive the fraternal kiss, that the resolutions breathe a true English spirit; they contain expressions of undissembled love of their country, and tell the French, "if you come, we are determined to repel you with all our might." The right hon. gentleman has asserted with great boldness (I need not expect candour on that side of the house), that the motives of many persons who had offered their services were very questionable, and that the resolutions passed in the borough had not a tendency to produce unanimity. With respect to the last, the contrary of this is evident. And to hear men who have never been supported but from parsimonious motives, who have been buying at their price all that have ever espoused their cause—to hear these men question the purity of motives is surprising. They habitually, if not naturally, ascribe those qualities to others which they know they inherit themselves. With respect to the tendency of the resolutions, I shall say, once for all, that if I was an inhabitant of the borough, attending at the meeting in which those resolutions were adopted, and there should come into the room a man who should state, that it had been said in the house of commons, that all reformers were friends to the French, and regarded as such by that people; the determination to resist them, expressed in one of their resolutions, would be to me the best proof that no such intention as that of assisting the French was ever entertained by the inhabitants of the borough of Southwark. From all these considerations, sir, I must say, I think it not candid or prudent in ministers to shrink from this discussion, and refuse inquiry. I think they owe it to themselves; I know they owe it to their country.—Mr. Sheridan concluded with saying he heartily approved of the present motion, and would cordially vote for it.

On a division there appeared—for the motion 22; against it 141.

JUNE 18.

STATE OF IRELAND.

A message from his Majesty was delivered on the 18th, and this day Mr. Dundas moved, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to return his Majesty the thanks of this house for his most gracious message: to assure his Majesty, that, while we deeply regret that the machinations of wicked men have induced any of his Majesty's subjects to commit acts of rebellion against his Majesty's government, we, at the same time, feel the highest satisfaction that this occasion has afforded a fresh proof of the zeal and ardour for the service of their country which has ever distinguished the militia of this kingdom: that, conceiving it may be of the utmost importance, for the protection of his Majesty's loyal subjects in Ireland, for the speedy and effectual suppression of the present rebellion, and for the general defence of the British empire: that his Majesty should avail himself of the voluntary offers of service which have been made by several regiments of militia, we will immediately enter into the consideration of such provisions as may be necessary for enabling his Majesty, for a time, and to an extent to be limited, to accept the services of such militia regiments as may wish to be employed at this important conjuncture."

Mr. Banks moved as an amendment, "That the latter part of the address, giving the consent of the house to the militia being sent to Ireland, be left out."

MR. SHERIDAN said, the motion which has to-night been submitted to the house, is the most extraordinary in its nature that ever was heard within these walls; and the manner in which it has been brought forward, is to the full as extraordinary. Long as the house has been inured to be treated with contempt by the king's ministers, the mode in which they have been treated on the present occasion, is even more insulting than anything they have yet experienced. The right hon. gentleman who moved the address, seems to have considered the measure proposed as one to which no objection could possibly be framed; and he introduced it as one which demanded neither apology nor explanation. I confess, that the subject should be viewed so much as a matter of course by that right hon. gentleman, does likewise a little surprise me. We cannot forget how lately the right hon. gentleman came down to this house, and stated the country to be in a state of imminent danger, which required the exertion of every heart and hand for its defence. It is, indeed, extraordinary, then, that after telling us of the danger of the crisis, after all the regular troops are sent out of the kingdom, and when twelve hundred more cannot be found, he should call upon the house to give their consent to strip the country of the militia forces, on which it relies for its defence. We have not been told

how this drain is to be supplied ; what new securities are to be provided. All this the right hon. gentleman considers as a matter of course, which he is neither called upon to reconcile to his former statement, nor to defend upon any ground of constitutional principle or sound policy.

The right hon. gentleman who followed upon the other side, was at no greater pains in his short speech, to give any argument in support of the measure proposed. And what is this extraordinary measure intended to gain ? From the lords' bill it appears, that the militia force which it is thus intended to send to Ireland is only twelve hundred.—[Here Mr. Sheridan was informed that the number was to be twelve thousand.]—But if such an additional force is wanted, why not send all the regular troops which are to be found, before the constitutional principle is violated ? Why not send the two thousand of the guards in town, and, instead of twelve thousand, send only ten thousand ? And if these twelve thousand are sent, are you sure that this will do ? Will you continue to send more of the militia to Ireland, without any assurance that the danger, lately so alarming, is removed ; or without being informed where you are to look for defence ?

The right hon. gentleman who spoke last, began his speech with saying, that nothing like an argument had been advanced on this side of the house worthy of serious confutation ; but the right hon. gentleman, however, continued to make a pretty long and warm reply to these no-arguments. It has been asked, what would have been thought of ministers if they had concealed the offer made by the militia ? If ministers could have done what they now propose without consulting the house, I will venture to say, that we should have heard nothing of this offer. Just as they have continued to send all the regular force to Ireland upon the king's prerogative, without ever acquainting the house of the object, or asking its advice with regard to the measures which it was necessary to pursue, they would have acted. The advice of parliament would have been despised, and ministers would have proceeded upon their own discretion. Although they may hold in contempt the advice of this house, they were not quite bold enough to act in violation of the law, which they are afraid, and which, I hope, will still be found too powerful for them. They required the consent of the house, and it was ne-

cessary to apply for its sanction. Never was there a word of rebellion in Ireland mentioned ; never was the least communication made, on which the house could offer its advice, till its consent must be obtained to one of the most unconstitutional measures that ever was brought forward in parliament.

The right hon. gentleman who spoke last, in replying to the no-arguments which had been used on this side of the house, fastened on an expression of my hon. friend, that he would not vote a single shilling, nor agree to send a single man to Ireland, for the purpose of subjugating the oppressed people of that country. Is it then unconstitutional—is it unparliamentary language for a member of this house to say, that he cannot give his aid to any system of the executive government, till he has examined and approved of the grounds on which they are justified ? Does the right hon. gentleman remember what Mr. Burke said in his letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe ?—and I hope the authority of Mr. Burke will not be less in his estimation than when he was confirmed by his sentiments, and animated by his example. In the letter to which I allude, Mr. Burke says, “ that the house of commons will never enter into a war for the conquest of Ireland without knowing the grounds of the quarrel.” This, then, is what my hon. friend requires. He desires to know the ground of the quarrel, and this he thinks an essential inquiry before the house ought, either directly or indirectly, to give its sanction to any system of measures, or contribute its support to carry them into effect. The right hon. gentleman expresses a doubt whether we are at all willing to give our support to extinguish rebellion in Ireland. I am aware that the right hon. gentleman is desirous to lead us into slippery ground. He shall not, however, betray me to be guilty of any indiscretion. When he accuses us of being desirous to withhold our aid in the extinction of that rebellion, I would ask him, whether he means to say, that in every case this house is bound to side with a king of Ireland, and an Irish house of commons, against the people of Ireland ? Will he maintain that proposition generally ? Will he, without directly apostatizing from every opinion he ever held, deny that cases may occur in which it would be impossible for this house to give their support on that side ? Suppose that the Irish parliament were to re-enact all those horrible statutes by which the people were oppressed, and absolutely reduced to

the condition of brutes, would this house be bound to support the Irish legislature against the people in such a quarrel? If the parliament of Ireland were to enact torture by law, if it were to state as necessary, and establish in practice, bastiles, arbitrary imprisonments, ignominious punishment without conviction, transportation without trial, and a series of oppression too degrading, too tyrannical for human nature to endure, would the British house of commons be bound to support the Irish legislature against the resentment which such proceedings had provoked? Merely because the men who resist such oppression are called rebels, and those who oppose them are called the king's troops, must this house, at all hazards, support the Irish legislature? Unless the right hon. gentleman is prepared to retract every opinion which he ever entertained upon similar subjects, he cannot affirm that this house, in such a state of things, has but one line of conduct to pursue. This house is not bound to sanction the injustice, and to strengthen the oppressions which the legislature of the sister kingdom, however independent, might be pleased to inflict. This much I say generally, because I am unwilling to refer to the particular events of the present time. I think, however, I have said enough to show that it becomes this house gravely to inquire what is the nature of the quarrel in which it is called upon to engage, and what the grounds on which its support is demanded. I am ready to declare that every effort ought to be exerted to prevent Ireland from falling under the power of France; but this is a point totally different from the merit of the struggle to which we are required to become parties. One hon. gentleman has thought proper to assert, that the rebellion in Ireland is not only unprecedented in its nature, but he has styled it wholly unprovoked, and ventured to affirm that every measure of conciliation was employed to avert it. It was, indeed, with the utmost wonder and surprise that I heard this assertion advanced. What! when conciliation was held out to the people of Ireland, was there any discontent? When the government of Ireland was agreeable to the wishes of the people, was there any discontent? After the prospect of that conciliation was taken away—after Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled—after the hopes which had been raised were blasted—when the spirit of the people was beaten down, insulted, despised, I will ask any gentleman to point out a single

act of conciliation which has emanated from the government of Ireland? On the contrary, has not that country exhibited one continual scene of the most grievous oppression, of the most vexatious proceedings; arbitrary punishments inflicted; and torture declared necessary by the highest authority in the sister kingdom next to that of the legislature? And do gentlemen say that the indignant spirit which is roused by such exercise of government is unprovoked? Is this conciliation? is this lenity? Has every thing been done to avert the evils of rebellion? It is the fashion to say, and the address holds the same language, that the rebellion which now rages in the sister kingdom has been owing to the machinations of "wicked men." Agreeing to the amendment proposed, it was my first intention to move that these words should be omitted. But no, sir, the fact they assert is true. It is, indeed, to the measures of wicked men that the deplorable state of Ireland is to be imputed. It is to those wicked ministers who have broken the promises they held out; who betrayed the party they seduced into their views, to be the instruments of the foulest treachery that ever was practised against any people. It is to those wicked ministers who have given up that devoted country to plunder; resigned it a prey to this faction, by which it has so long been trampled upon, and abandoned it to every species of insult and oppression by which a country was ever overwhelmed, or the spirit of a people insulted, that we owe the miseries into which Ireland is plunged, and the dangers by which England is threatened. These evils are the doings of wicked ministers, and, applied to them, the language of the address records a fatal and melancholy truth.

But, if gentlemen are not disposed to take these words as understood by me, let them look back at the circumstances, and see whether they can discover any cause adequate to the effects which we behold. Let gentlemen look back to the period when a whole people, under the government of Lord Fitzwilliam, exhibited the most fervent and sincere loyalty, and say whether they can discover any cause for the change which has taken place. After being betrayed, duped, insulted, fooled, disappointed in their dearest hopes, and deprived of the government on which they could confide, and again thrown into the hands of the rulers they detested and despised, was it impossible that they should feel emotion of indignation and discontent? Every man in the

house too well recollects the subscription set on foot in London, under the auspices, I believe, of Mr. Angerstein, in order to collect money for the support of industrious manufacturers in Ireland, wholly without employment, and destitute of the means of subsistence. Of this description there were from 30,000 to 40,000 men in Ireland. By the produce of charitable subscription, 25,000 a week were, by the scantiest benefactions, prevented from being famished. Such was the situation of so many unhappy individuals; and when charity was wearied out, unable any longer to supply their wants, it was not the poison of French principles, but the want of bread that seduced them. It was not their desire to be Frenchified, but their reluctance to be famished, that wrought upon them to make new attempts to escape from their misery. This was the true cause that made them a prey to seduction; and with one so satisfactory before our eyes, why need we seek to impute their conduct to the poison of French principles—a cause so inadequate to the effects?

This much I have thought it right to say, in defence of those who think it necessary to inquire into the grounds of the quarrel between the government and people of the sister kingdom. I now return to the measure before the house. The right hon. gentleman denies that the militia could be intended, in any shape, as a counterbalance to a standing army, because it is the prerogative of the crown to reduce the militia at pleasure. I should really have expected, that upon such a question the right hon. gentleman would have argued on some information upon the subject. The right hon. gentleman has proved himself completely ignorant of the constitution of the militia. The king can neither increase nor diminish the number of the militia. Each county supplies a certain number, and can neither have more nor less than its quota. It has been said that the service is voluntary, but I contend that it is not. The case of the fencibles is mentioned as in point, but nothing can be more different. The fencibles are raised on certain conditions between the individuals authorized by ministers and the men who enlist; nor is it surprising that these engagements should be violated by those who have shown themselves incapable of adhering to any contract, or being faithful to any engagements. The militia, however, was on a different footing. The militia was raised, not by a contract between individuals, but on a compact of law. It is in vain to

talk of a thing being voluntary where no real opinion is left. The case of the worthy baronet (Sir L. Palk) is a proof of this. He finds himself in the whimsical situation of being a *volunteer* without knowing it. It reminds me of the story of the people who were dragging a man along, and on being asked the reason, gave for answer, "that it was a volunteer they were carrying along with them." It had been said, "that the resolution of the hon. gentleman and the worthy baronet, who have expressed their determination to follow their corps wherever they go, is a proof that they are not compelled." The motive from which they act, however, is submission, not consent. They go, not for the reason given by the right hon. gentleman, but for the reason assigned by themselves, that they would not desert the brave men with whom they served. What, indeed, is the mode employed to collect the disposition of a regiment respecting its going to Ireland? They are called out on the parade. Every man watches the looks of his neighbour; he is afraid to refuse assent at a moment when suspicion is so ready to fasten on the most indifferent things. With aching hearts, with reluctant minds, without anything of sound will and real consent, they are dragged into an acquiescence, which is called voluntary; and these are the men who are considered as fit corps for resisting rebellion in Ireland. The comparison of the voluntary contributions was perfectly exact. To the measure of voluntary contributions I was friendly, and I was sorry to see it assume, in any degree, the appearance of compulsion. I did not like to hear of regiments called out to be asked whether they would give up a week's pay, and of ships' companies brought on deck to subscribe their contribution. The mischiefs of a deliberate army have already been forcibly represented; a deliberate army may become an addressing army; and an addressing army a dictating army. When the principle is once violated, there are no mischiefs to which it may not extend.

We are now called upon for our last military stake, the militia; and it is natural to ask where we are to look for defence? Is the danger, to which the public attention was so forcibly directed, less now than it was? Before the trials at Maidstone took place, we were informed by a right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Dundas), that dangers of the utmost magni-

tude existed. The promised communications on the subject, however, have not yet been received. Are we to understand, then, that the Habeas Corpus was suspended without any sufficient cause; or do the dangers which then existed still threaten to assail us? Have ministers fairly and impartially weighed our situation, and knowing, as all the world must have known, the state of Ireland—the number of troops in that quarter, and the probable demand for new reinforcements, have they taken the precautions for supplying the drain of men, and providing such means of defence as our situation afforded? This they have not done. They called upon the spirit and the exertion of the country; they called upon men to forget their political divisions, and to unite in the great object of the national defence. Many of those who had been in the habit of opposing ministers showed a zealous disposition to support the great object of national defence. In many cases, this spirit had been answered by a behaviour highly discreditable to ministers. Under symptoms of apostacy from every principle men had previously entertained, their services were rejected. To the signs of dissent which the right hon. gentleman exhibits, I say that the association formed in the borough of Southwark is a proof of this assertion. For another proof of it, I have only to look at an hon. friend of mine beside me (General Tarleton). It would be superfluous in me to say anything in praise of his courage and military talents. This country, all Europe and America, can bear testimony to his merit. My hon. friend candidly and manfully offered his services wherever they could be employed. They were rejected, however, with contempt. And does any person suppose that, if my hon. friend had been in the habit of cringing to ministers, he would have remained unemployed? Indeed, to the surprise of the enemy, and to the astonishment of the country, his services have been rejected, merely because he remained faithful to the political sentiments he has entertained. Religious distinctions, too, have been kept up, distinctions which, when the situation of the Pope is considered, any belief in his supremacy would not have rendered him very formidable. Some time ago, when I proposed that a certain oath, required to be taken by those who serve his Majesty in a military capacity, should be omitted in favour of Roman Catholics, the motion was rejected. Brought

forward partially on another bill by an hon. gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) it succeeded ; and was rejected on another attempt to extend it to dissenters. Another instance of this spirit occurred in the behaviour of ministers to Lord Petre. That nobleman had been at the trouble and expense of raising a corps of Essex Rangers. The commission, by which this corps was to be commanded by Lord Petre's son, was refused to be signed, because that gentleman was a member of the Whig Club. Perhaps this offer may have since been accepted, and the circumstance of difficulty cleared up. There are other instances, however, in which the same spirit has been displayed by ministers. A noble duke (Bedford), of great character and influence, desirous to exert that influence in such a manner as might strengthen the country at the present difficult crisis, had, upon the most liberal terms, under the sanction of the lord lieutenant, raised a corps of 450 volunteers at Tavistock, in Devonshire, which was to be united to a corps of 150 which previously existed. These men were to be clothed and paid at the noble duke's own expense, and the men were raised, and everything arranged. Everything was prepared—when, at a meeting of the Whig Club, the noble duke having said, that an hon. friend of his, not now present, was more meritorious from the animosity which ministers had testified against him ; from a newspaper report of this speech, the services of the noble duke were rejected. A letter was sent by the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Dundas), commenting upon that sentence in the speech, and arguing that a person who held such language was unfit to be entrusted with any command. Upon this pretext the services of the noble duke were rejected. Surely ministers, while they act in this manner, check the spirit of coming forward in the defence of the country, and deprive it of the assistance of many who are zealous in its cause, and neglect those precautions of security which the drain of troops to Ireland has rendered necessary. To keep Ireland against the will of the people is a vain expectation. With 80,000 troops with arms and discipline, against an unarmed and undisciplined multitude, is it not clear that the contest lies between the government and the people ? Without reversing the system, therefore, Ireland, as the phrase is, cannot be saved. The struggle is one, not of local discontent and partial disaffection, but it is a contest between the people and the government. In such a state of things,

without entering into a particular inquiry, the fair presumption is, that the government is to blame. He concluded with concurring in the amendment.

The house divided ; for the amendment 47 ; against it 118. The original address was then put and carried.

JANUARY 23, 1799.

UNION OF IRELAND WITH GREAT BRITAIN.

On the 22nd of January the following message was delivered to the house :— “ His Majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of effecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament ; and his Majesty recommends it to this house to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting, and finally defeating, this design ; and he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred (joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest) will dispose the parliaments of both kingdoms to provide in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such a complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connection essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire.” On this day Mr. Dundas moved the usual address.

MR. SHERIDAN rose and said, Sir, I must frankly declare that I am not of the same opinion with the right hon. gentleman, who thinks that there is nothing more necessary on the part of his Majesty's ministers than to move a mere address, returning the thanks of this house for his Majesty's most gracious communication. The subject is too important to be passed lightly over in any stage of its progress, and the interests that will naturally come into discussion too vast to be bounded over with an unreflecting rapidity. Not one man in the country would be free from reproach, if he could regard with apathy, or with an ease of temper approaching to indifference, a question that at once involves everything dear to Irishmen, and which ought to be dear to every subject of the British empire. As I cannot view these matters wholly with unconcern, I must think that more is necessary on the part of his Majesty's ministers than merely to move an address of thanks. I say, sir, I cannot be of this opinion, because, when I found it stated that it is the principal object of the message from the crown to invite the commons of Great Britain to the consideration of means for finally adjusting the interests in common between Great Britain and Ireland, I

am naturally led to inquire how the terms of the final adjustment made and agreed to by the parliaments of the two countries, in 1782, came to fail of their object. In that year there was an adjustment; and no man acquainted with the history of that period, no man whose study has not been confined to mere local occurrences, can have forgotten in what kind of circumstances that adjustment arose, and under what kind of auspices it was made final. Nothing can be more obvious than the propriety of inquiring at this time how that adjustment failed of its object. The right hon. gentleman, adopting the language of the message, has assumed that the house is already in possession of the facts and arguments on which are to be founded the policy, justice, and expediency of agitating at this time such a discussion; in this way telling the whole world that the final adjustment, ratified in 1782, was not a final adjustment in point of fact, but an adjustment to be held final at the pleasure of the English government. But there are no such things in the possession of the house as the materials from whence to reason that it is now either politic, expedient, or just, to come to the discussion of this question of final adjustment. Hence, before ministers recommended to the house of commons to take measures that lead inevitably to the discussion of some plan of union, it was incumbent upon them to have shown us that the last pledge of the English parliament to the people of Ireland, by which their independence was recognized and their rights acknowledged, has not produced that unanimity, that concord of sentiment, and earnest exertion to promote their own welfare, while they cordially and sincerely manifested their zeal for the happiness and prosperity of this country, which that people were expected to display, and which the parliaments of the two countries sought to cherish.—But more than the effect immediately upon the people, it is fit to inquire whether the final adjustment led to the measures of mutual confidence, and produced that unanimity of sentiment and object in the two parliaments, which, for the happiness and honour of both kingdoms, every man wished might be its permanent effect. Sir, I think it impossible for any man clearly to show that there has been any want of this unanimity on any important occasion. I am the more strongly impressed with this belief, because a solemn declaration of the Irish parliament, sanctioned by all Ireland, is now on record, wherein we have it emphatically

stated that the independence of Ireland will be asserted by the people of Ireland, and that their parliament is an independent legislature. The recollection of this declaration brings to my mind the strong apprehension of the danger, the peril of agitating anew the question of Irish independence. What has that declaration stated? Sir, it is a manly, firm, and honourable testimony to all time, of the proud, noble spirit of a nation rising into distinction and mounting up to freedom. They there say, that "there is no power whatever competent to make laws for Ireland but the parliament of Ireland;" and among other things equally strong and just, we find them assert this as their birth-right, and which they are determined in every situation to defend and maintain against whatever kind of enemy. When I find this declaration of the Irish parliament, acquiesced in by the English, that they did come to a final adjustment is obvious; yet the words "a solid, permanent basis," convey some reflections on the proceedings of the parliament since that period, and it might fairly be supposed, that its delinquency only would have instigated his Majesty's ministers to adopt a course of conduct by which, if they succeed in the enterprize, they shall accomplish for ever the subjugation of Ireland and the slavery of its inhabitants. But, sir, I must think the people in that country, who really cherish a love of rational liberty, who have dwelt with delight on the recollection of that, till now, auspicious period, when independence came upon them as it were by surprise, when the genius of freedom rested upon their island—the whole people, in short, will come to this second adjustment with a temper which I am afraid, sir, will augur not tranquillity but disquietude; not prosperity but calamity; not the suppression of treason but the extension and increase of plots, to multiply and ensanguine its horrors. Nevertheless, I must own that there is something informal in this way of treating the question immediately before the house. But much as I respect your forms, sir, I own to you those are things, and this is a question which I cannot permit myself lightly to discuss, and which ought not to be shrunk from on light grounds. I am aware that the grounds I stand on are at once ticklish and dangerous; that my motives are liable both to misrepresentation and misapprehension; that a licentious few, and an ignorant many, will distort, or not perceive, the grounds of my arguments, and the use I am desirous

to make of them. But there are topics, on the discussion of which a man must not wholly consult the degree of safety to his reputation among the unreflecting portions of mankind — on which he must forget what he owes to his own dignity, if, fearful of the insidious misinterpretation of his sentiments, or the more insidious misrepresentation of his motives, he shrink from the subject, and fail to do that which is peremptorily his duty. I feel that to be silent on the present occasion, were to act from terror in a way unworthy of the majesty of truth ; unbecoming a man enamoured of free discussion ; unlike the friend and supporter of general liberty ;—I cannot do this. My country has claims upon me which I am not more proud to acknowledge than ready to liquidate, to the full measure of my ability. Is there any man who can wish to do less?—or have the whole system of human connection and the economy of human passions been changed and perverted with those changes in the political world, from which some derive rank and emolument by the prostitution of integrity and all the virtues? But, sir, there was a time when I should have been told, that to agitate any question in this house relative to the affairs of Ireland, were to retrench upon the rights of the Irish parliament : that the independence of their legislature was not to be infringed upon by the discussion of questions which belonged to it exclusively to discuss upon and decide : that we could not agitate the affairs of Ireland in any manner, without grossly insulting the dignity, and making a question of the constitutional competence of the parliament of that country to legislate for themselves : that, in short, it would be to arouse and inflame that quick spirit of independence which the sister kingdom knew how to express, and had ever appeared both able and ready to infuse into a system of ardent intrepid opposition to every kind of ulterior domination. But, surely, when the question is now the independence of the parliament of Ireland—when it is attempted to introduce measures which have in their issues not merely the independence but the existence of this parliament, honourable gentlemen will not resort to that argument. Probably I shall be told, that I ought not to draw into discussion topics that, in their very nature tend to excite discontent, by being closely interwoven with the events of a recent period of distraction and danger : that I cannot dwell long on these topics without relapsing into warmth : that I am liable

to use inflammatory language: that, in particular, I ought to consider the present state of Ireland, before I essay the discussion of such intricate and delicate interests as embraced by the king's message. The right hon. gentleman opposite me ought to have done all this, he ought to have considered the state of Ireland before he introduced in this house, as the chief servant of the crown, a subject that, to be met fairly at any time, requires much previous preparation, and which at this moment is to put everything to hazard. Sir, I can see the possible danger of adding to the discontents of the people of Ireland. An intriguing, ambitious enemy, may take advantage of the crisis, and desperate factious spirits at home may seize upon it as an opportunity favourable to the success of their wild and visionary projects. But these dangers are only to be apprehended from the innovation of the rights of the people of Ireland, as forming an independent nation; and he who merely seeks to arrest the arm of the invader, to check his spirit of aggression and usurpation, so far from justly incurring reproach, is in fairness entitled to the praise of honourable and virtuous enterprize. I shall speak out manfully on an occasion which eminently invites every friend to constitutional liberty to the utmost exertion of his powers. The present moment is our's, the next may be the enemy's. I am perfectly ready, however, to give credit to ministers for purity of intention. On my word, I think they would not propose here a measure which they believed would ultimately cause a separation of this country from Ireland. With them, I say, it is necessary to the happiness of the empire, that it is essentially a source of wealth and power to continue that connection with Ireland. It is a connection which, as much as any man, I wish ever to preserve, and I do not think it necessary to claim the indulgence of the right hon. gentleman and the house, when I declare I believe I am equally averse as they are to the sedition and revolt adopted in the sister kingdom; that I equally abhor and detest the conduct of an ambitious and rapacious foe, in the whole career of his acts of unjust and unprovoked aggression of the rights of the weak, or unsuspecting, or indolent states. But am I, therefore, to vote for measures which but too strongly express the character of that system which this enemy had so wickedly and flagrantly pursued? God forbid! Perhaps we are to be told, that the enemy still perseveres in his intention

of invading Ireland; and, if that were possible, to sever from the empire one of its most useful and ornamental branches. That he lays in wait for an opportunity to carry decisively into effect these ambitious views. I do not, sir, at all doubt that France now anxiously looks on, eager to come in for a share of the plunder of the liberties of Ireland. The enemy with whom we have to contend is as vigilant as dextrous, and it is in the constitution of his system of universal pillage, and the indiscriminate abuse of every maxim of honourable policy, on all occasions to profit by the distresses or the agitations of other powers. To invite and encourage France, it was enough that his Majesty's ministers should have brought forward the present measure. There have been nations, who, after asserting by their arms their independence, have, by their improvident use of victory, sown the seeds of future degradation and ruin, too deep and too diffusive ever to be able again to resist their enemies. So true is it, that external dangers will unite communities, while the moment of triumph ushers in all those recollections of jealousy, of distrust, of uneasiness at the measures of a government or a minister, which had laid dormant in the hour of united exertion. I have told you, sir, that I do not doubt but that France waits with impatience for an opportunity effectually to strike her long meditated blow against Ireland. She has manifested this spirit from time to time, and I must assume it as a fair ground of argument against the present measure, that its tendency is rather to encourage the enemy than drive them from their settled purpose. Not only do I believe, that they have agreed upon some new expedition and attack, but have increased their exertions from the time the scheme of union was first agitated by ministers. But I shall be told, this measure will have the effect of defeating the enemy, by showing them how vain it will be in future to attempt anything against united Ireland. Now I hoped that our splendid naval victories, that the discovery of the plots, the possession of the papers, the discomfiture of the projects of the internal and external enemies of Ireland, would have satisfied the minds of all, that no new project of invasion can be carried into effect. Sir, I do say, it is the conduct of ministers towards the Irish nation from which only we can have any reason to apprehend danger. By dividing the native and constitutional defenders of Ireland, they sow among them the

seeds of treason, and encourage the attempts of the enemy on that unfortunate country. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) told us yesterday, that, without hearing the notice I then gave, he could not have expected such an opposition as the present to the motion, because the word "Union" was not to be found in the message. That I ought to have known that the described object was adjustment, not union. But, I must take it for granted, the right hon. gentleman will not fly to such a subterfuge on so important a question. Indeed, I persuade myself he will admit at once, that it is a question of terms and not of fact. If, however, it should be contended, that I am borne out in the inference by the message, look to Ireland. The recent changes in that country, the dismissals of some very respectable characters from office, distinctly points to the union. I grieve to see such a name as that of Lord Cornwallis to such letters and papers as have, within these few weeks, been published at the castle. It is painful to read in a letter from this man the dismissal from office of such a character as Sir J. Parnell. With these facts before us, it is perfectly fair to assume that union is the object, and it being no longer a question of terms, I know I am perfectly in order in arguing against the measure. I will not now enter into a detailed view of the subject; but I am glad the right hon. gentleman has given us an opportunity to know when we may regularly expect to meet it in that way. Neither do I mean to say anything of the advantages of the measures. I can admit that this is a fair discussion always, and may at this moment safely go forward to the public. But I do not know how to admit, that not to adopt an union, were to invite the separation of the two countries by a French force. Nay, my opinion is directly the reverse of this; and I must say that, situated as Ireland is, without having in one instance manifested a wish to unite, but, on the contrary, having unequivocally declared herself hostile to the proposition of a union, that if it be effected, it will be a union accomplished by surprise, fraud, and corruption; and which must place the people of Ireland in a worse situation than they were before. I think there are two propositions which I have now established: the first, that it is decidedly an infraction and violation of her acknowledged right of independent legislation; and second, that union cannot prevent the separation of Ireland from this country by France. The

third proposition I have to offer to the consideration of the house is, that it is not possible that, in the present state of Ireland, the people can declare and act upon their genuine sentiments; and let any man who has a head to conceive, and a heart to feel for the miseries of Ireland, put this memorable question to himself—is it possible that the free, fair, and unbiassed sense of the people of Ireland can be collected at this time on this question? The English force in that country is at once an answer to this question. I am not to be told, that if even the people should be cheated and tricked into union, and out of independence, it is of no consequence, as the measure is intended solely for their good, and that we ought to adopt it now, and convince them afterwards. This will not be argued by any man; or if it is, let gentlemen look to union under all its circumstances, and strange indeed must be their mode of reasoning, if they do not agree with me, that in the present conjuncture of affairs, union will lead to separate and not perpetuate the connection. If any man should say, “Yes, we have force in Ireland; there may be an opposition there to union, but now is our time to play their own game of 1782 back upon themselves;” if there be a man in this house capable of such mean and contemptible conduct, I leave it to gentlemen to consider what will be the effect of such an example. With respect to the conspiracies, which happily have been defeated, I own they were such as ought to be carefully guarded against; and I deplore as much as many that the means of combining insurrection were so various and melancholy. There might have been much of the cause of revolt concealed under the measures of the government; but if the Irish should, at any future period, awake from the slumbers of that sloth which the slavery of union is to occasion, how are they to be replied to if they should say, “You offered to us your assistance against domestic and foreign enemies, we accepted of it, and gave you affection and gratitude, and the irreproachable pledge of all the support in our power in return. But having enabled us to repel invasion and suppress rebellion, you took from us our parliament with your 40,000 soldiers, and dissipating our independence, you inflicted on us a union to which our fellow-subjects, famished and fled, could give no opposition, and this not by force, but by an act of negative intimidation.” Mr. Sheridan said, those who understand what it is to acquire negative successes, will be at no

loss to comprehend what I mean by negative intimidation ; if the people of Ireland should say, “ that by your forces you deprived them of the means of defending themselves ; that you wrung from them their independence, and influenced the parliament not to return to them, the people, the right of suffrage, but to give the Irish people up to foreign domination ; ” consider, I conjure you, these matters, and ask yourselves what would be the character of any future insurrection ? I will not say that, in all its great and interesting features, it would be quite different from that recently subdued, and there would be nothing in it of which they need be ashamed. They need not skulk from the question, for the struggle would be to resent the plunder of their rights, and not the differences subsisting between protestant and catholic, not for schemes of wild and foolish republicanism, not from ill-humour towards one set of men, or one set of measures. Instead of an union of sentiment, I maintain, that if you adopt the measure unfolded by the message, you would create an union of dissatisfaction. It is impossible to conceive that the measure is palatable in Ireland, unless we can suppose that, having for 300 years endured the most inhuman insults, at last, when they had wrung from this country that which it was a shame to have deprived them of, they would freely, and without bias, give it up 16 years afterwards ; that they would surrender their rights, because it was the pleasure of a British minister to propose that the Irish parliament should no longer exist. This is a proposition which cannot be entertained. Undoubtedly, if I had been told that the whole people of Ireland had declared that they would shake off all allegiance ; that the parliament had violated the rights of the people ; that the country did not prosper under its constitution ; I see strong reasons for agreeing to the proposition of union. But, on the contrary, we have been told upon high authority, that the comforts of the people and the prosperity of Ireland have progressively increased with time ever since the independence of her parliament was recognized.

The Irish commons have been thanked, in speeches from the throne, for their patriotic vigilance in defeating the internal enemies of the country : and are the people of Ireland now to be told that, on the eve of new insurrections, the parliament of Great Britain, sitting in Westminster, can better provide means of security and defence for Ireland, than could the parliament of Ire-

land sitting in Dublin? After the example we have had of the great wisdom and profound powers of minute research of our own parliament, on a memorable occasion; after the report of the celebrated committee of conspiracy, whose reports stand contradicted by the verdicts of British juries, and whose accusations have been falsified by verdicts of acquittal—(a cry of “hear, hear”)—gentlemen may, if they please, deny me this conclusion from the premises, but I peremptorily repeat it—they may talk as disrespectfully as they please of English juries, but I maintain that the juries of Ireland, to say the least, have returned verdicts of conviction more contrary to justice, and much more dishonourable to them as men, than those acquittals of the juries of England could possibly be. But to return to the question: are we to be told that the measure of an union will not wholly dissolve the legislature of Ireland; that independence will survive union, though in a modified state; that parliament will be left to judge of the local affairs of Ireland? Really, sir, this seems almost too much for men’s feelings—a parliament!—a sort of national vestry for the parish of Ireland sitting in a kind of mock legislative capacity, after being ignobly degraded from the rank of representatives of an independent people; and deprived of the functions of an inquisitorial power, exercising and enjoying the greatest authority that any parliament can possess. From these propositions, and having merits to plead, the presumption fairly is, that it is impossible the members of the Irish parliament, any more than their constituents, can come to the question of union with unbiassed minds, or agree to it under any other circumstances except of great force. Consider the question in another point of view. “Is the parliament of England competent to legislate for the parliament of Ireland?” Impossible. Every advantage of situation favours the one, the other is unfitted for governing, or giving law, by every disadvantage of situation, and every dissimilarity of temper and habit. An high authority of the sister nation, no less an authority than the Lord Chancellor Clare, has said, that the English parliament is less acquainted with the state of Ireland than any other body of men in the world. How can it be that, in this state, of ignorance, the parliament of England is better fitted to legislate for Irishmen, than that of Ireland with its experience? To assume this, were to advance the most monstrous and preposterous proposi-

tion that ever fell from man. Or is the system of ministers to be to embody their hoards, and, after new plots are hatched, to read the riot act to the parliament of Ireland? With respect to intimidation, would it not be to intimidate the Irish, were they told England would not in future be induced to send troops, or furnish money to Ireland, and that they would be left in a state of nakedness and poverty, at the mercy of those who once distracted the country? It would be enough to arouse their indignation, that these hints would be conveyed to them by a secretary or a clerk, and some men who are disgusted with acts of Irish government, would, perhaps, give up parliament in their heart; whilst others, who will view the question with more calmness, but not more honesty, will infer from the dismissal of such great characters as I have mentioned, that the government of this country will intimidate those whom they cannot persuade. They will see to what extent the same system must be carried in the military, and every other department. And can they, after this, be expected to say, that the fair opinion of the people of Ireland was collected on this subject?

Under all these circumstances, I think, sir, I may assume that I have made out my proposition, that if you effect an union now, no man can say that Ireland was a party to it; if so, ultimate separation must follow. Were it of consequence to speak of this measure in another manner, I would ask, what would the hon. gentleman opposite to me say if France acted in a similar manner, and this not a country in alliance with her—not so to a mere neutral country, but to a country dear to her on every account, to that country whose sons were fighting her battles in every quarter of the globe? What would they say if, after all, France annexed the territory of her friend and sister to France as one and indivisible, with 40,000 French defenders at their gates, &c.? Would it not be said, that it was the greatest perfidy? The King of Sardinia gave his consent that the French should take possession of his capital and territory, but it was the effect of force. And now we were to adopt a similar system in Ireland. I hear much of French principles, but I wish gentlemen would not so closely follow French practices. Let us abstain from French corruption, French usurpation, French perfidy. Let us leave no ground for saying that we have made use of corruption to acquire ascendancy or subjugate the rights of any people.

Let our union be a union of mind and spirit, as well as of interest and power—not that sort of marriage in which fraud is the suitor, and force the ratifier of the solemn contract. Let me conjure you not to commit a violent rape on your sister Ireland; for you may, by well-timed overtures, get her as a comfort at your side, full of love, full of fidelity, and full of confidence. You must be convinced that she will be in a deplorable situation indeed, if the banns are to be published from the trumpets of 40,000 British troops.

I think, sir, I have endeavoured to show—I may say, without vanity, I have shown—that there would be great danger even if you carry the measure; and I should like to know what are the dangers of delay, and what the necessity for dispatch. I did expect that ministers would set out by showing us this; but probably they have reserved themselves for a farther opportunity.—(Here Mr. Sheridan apologized for any warmth he might have displayed in the course of his speech, and observed, that if the question had been fairly taken up, instead of by intimidation and corruption, the house might have expected to have seen less warmth of manner.)—The only arguments I have seen for the measure that I can suppose come from ministers, are those contained in a book written, as I understand, by two gentlemen in office in Ireland, and which contains a statement that is now circulated as the terms of the union. A more offensive or more flimsy production I have never read. In this pamphlet I find some arguments for dispatch, and those tremendous arguments are the dread of the power of the pope and the English opposition; the probability that the parliaments of the two countries may alter their opinions by change of ministers; and, lastly, one that is highly indecent, the supposition that we may lose our virtuous sovereign.—(Here Mr. Sheridan commented on those different points, and said he thought it a strange way of counteracting the inflammatory effect of the speeches of the English opposition, or the proceedings of the English parliament, to bring a batch of Irish members into that house to partake of the sedition of the minority. But it is imputed to opposition, that they are liable to change their opinions; now the example of this is the regency, when the parliament of Ireland agreed with a great minority in the English parliament in the principle, objecting merely to the powers to be given to the regent).—But, sir, I wish ministers to

give fair play to Ireland. I have stated three of the arguments for dispatch; and the fourth for the measure is one that must everywhere excite indignation. This is, that the Irish took advantage in 1782 of the war, and that therefore England may now take advantage of the force of the country for the extinction of the independence of Ireland. This is the creed of the castle; but the English are not to be insulted in this way, nor their character traduced. Having, in a general way, thus combated the arguments of that pamphlet, Mr. Sheridan next took a view of the subject as a constitutional question, and contended, that as well might the English parliament vote the crown absolute, perpetuate a power in the king to control the grants of parliaments, and give to this parliament a right to exercise a vigour beyond the law, and vote itself not at all responsible to the people. It is no light matter even to have one hundred members coming here from Ireland without the means of being regularly instructed by their constituents; but, perhaps, I am to be told, as I understand has been asserted by an hon. gentleman opposite to me, that when once the parliament meets, the people have no right to hear of what their representatives are about; and that, therefore, it is not merely dangerous, but unconstitutional, to publish an account of their proceedings. Sir, I must suppose the right hon. gentleman to whom this doctrine is imputed, never used it in argument; for certainly if I found such doctrine urged in a pamphlet, I should think it my duty to move, that the house might instruct the attorney-general to prosecute the author, and that the book should be burnt by the common hangman. I once recommended a prosecution in this house, and once only in my life; it was against the author of a book, where it had been stated that the tree might remain sound even though the branches were lopped off. Now I think the same effect would follow, were that measure of restraint adopted by the house. But, if it is said that the principle of union was adopted by parliament in the instance of Scotland, I cannot admit that the existence of one bad precedent is any argument for adopting a second. With respect to the power of the Irish parliament to agree to the measure, I will say, that I think no power on earth has a right to proscribe the independence of the people. I have heard a vigorous statesman (Lord Grenville) use an argument that enforces this: he said, "that to alter the chartered rights of any company, would

be to change the power and prerogative of the crown, and that his Majesty could not assent to a bill for such a purpose, though it should even pass the two houses of parliament."

With respect to the enemies of the British government, it had two enemies in Ireland, "Poverty and Ignorance;" and unless it can be shown that the present measure will remove these—will prevent the repetition of those scenes of distress which passed in Ireland when there were, in the city of Dublin alone, 12,000 labourers, &c. out of employment, living on raspings of bread, or starving with their families—unless these evils can be ameliorated, if not wholly corrected by a union, I must be unfriendly to the measure. If the people of Ireland be active and industrious in every country but their own, it must be the effect of their government. First remove the causes of their misery, and then invite them, if you will, to a closer union. Mr. Arthur Young has attributed the growth of the evils, that render miserable the poor of Ireland, to the progress of French principles; but I am quite convinced the misery of that unfortunate class has had its origin and continues to increase with the exactions and imposts of their overgrown lords. [Here Mr. Sheridan resumed the arguments and comments on the argument in the pamphlet above alluded to, which relates to opposition; observing that no apprehensions of mischief need surely be entertained from it, especially if a noble marquis in another place was right in saying that opposition is no more.] Sir, I must say I think that noble person might as well have spared our feelings, and not have cut his clumsy capers on our grave. He has said he is no party man; sir, I blame no man for not being a party man, but I respect too well the memory of a Marquis of Rockingham; I respect too well the memory of a Mr. Burke; I also respect too well the memory of those principles which some of the present members of administration once were proud to avow—I think I ought to respect myself, though not of much importance; but particularly the great and virtuous characters with whom I have the honour to be connected; I ought to respect all those, and each of them, too much to join with the noble marquis in his death-song over the manes of party. And, sir, I hope, though at present the banners of opposition be furled in secession, they will again be displayed, and that its members will come forward and rally round the constitution when danger

menaces its sacred foundations ; that they will prove worthy of their principles, and of that liberty they value dear, by asserting and defending the independence of every legitimate, constitutional parliament, and the rights and liberties of every people. He concluded with moving the following amendment :—

“ At the same time to express the surprise and deep regret with which this house now, for the first time, learns from his Majesty, that the final adjustment which, upon his Majesty’s gracious recommendation, took place between the two kingdoms in the year 1782, and which, by the declaration of the parliaments of both countries, placed the connection between them upon a solid and permanent basis, has not produced the effects expected from that solemn settlement ; and farther, humbly to express to his Majesty, that his Majesty’s faithful commons having strong reason to believe that it is in the contemplation of his Majesty’s ministers to propose a union of the legislatures of the two kingdoms, notwithstanding the said final and solemn adjustment, feel it to be their bounden duty, impressed as they are with the most serious apprehensions of the consequences of such a proceeding at this time, to take the earliest opportunity humbly to implore his Majesty not to listen to the counsel of those who shall advise or promote such a measure at the present crisis, and under the present circumstances of the empire.”

Mr. Sheridan afterwards withdrew his amendment, and the original motion was put and carried.

JANUARY 31.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the following resolutions :—First, That in order to promote and secure the essential interests of Great Britain and Ireland, and to consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire, it will be advisable to concur in such measures as may best tend to unite the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland into one kingdom, in such manner, and on such terms and conditions as may be established by acts of the respective parliaments of his Majesty’s said kingdoms.

“ Second, That it appears to this committee that it would be fit to propose as the first article to serve as a basis of the said union, that the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland shall, upon a day to be agreed upon, be united into one kingdom, by the name of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

“ Third, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the succession to the monarchy and the imperial crown of the said united kingdoms shall continue limited and settled, in the same manner as the imperial crown of the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland now

stands limited and settled, according to the existing laws, and to the terms of the union between England and Scotland.

“ Fourth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the said united kingdom be presented in one and the same parliament, to be styled the parliament of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that such a number of lords spiritual and temporal, and such a number of members of the house of commons as shall be hereafter agreed upon by acts of the respective parliaments as aforesaid, shall sit and vote in the said parliaments on the part of Ireland, and shall be summoned, chosen, and returned in such manner as shall be fixed by an act of the parliament of Ireland previous to the said union; and that every member hereafter to sit and vote in the said parliament of the united kingdom shall, until the said parliament shall otherwise provide, take and subscribe the same oaths, and make the same declarations as are by law required to be taken, subscribed, and made, by the members of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland.

“ Fifth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the churches of England and Ireland, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof shall be preserved as now by law established.

“ Sixth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that his Majesty’s subjects in Ireland shall at all times hereafter be entitled to the same privileges, and be on the same footing in respect of trade and navigation in all ports and places belonging to Great Britain, and in all cases with respect to which treaties shall be made by his Majesty, his heirs, or successors, with any foreign power, as his Majesty’s subjects in Great Britain: that no duty shall be imposed on the import or export between Great Britain and Ireland of any articles now duty free; and that on other articles there shall be established, for a time to be limited, such a moderate rate of equal duties as shall, previous to the union, be agreed upon and improved by the respective parliaments, subject, after the expiration of such limited time, to be diminished equally with respect to both kingdoms, but in no case to be increased; that all articles which may at any time hereafter be imported into Great Britain from foreign parts, shall be importable through either kingdom into the other, subject to the like duties and regulations as if the same were imported directly from foreign parts; that where any articles, the growth, produce, or manufacture of either kingdom, are subject to any internal duty in one kingdom, such countervailing duties (over and above any duties on import to be fixed as aforesaid) shall be imposed as shall be necessary to prevent any inequality in that respect; and that all other matters of trade and commerce other than the foregoing, and than such others as may before the union be specially agreed upon for the due encouragement of the agriculture and manufactures of the respective kingdoms, shall remain to be regulated from time to time by the united parliament.

“ Seventh, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that the charge arising from the payment of the interest or sinking fund for the reduction of the principal of the debt incurred in either kingdom before the union, shall continue to be separately defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland respectively. That for a number of years to be limited, the future ordinary expenses of the united king-

dom, in peace or war, shall be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland jointly, according to such propositions as shall be established by the respective parliaments previous to the union; and that, after the expiration of the time to be so limited, the proportions shall not be liable to be varied, except according to such rates and principles as shall be in like manner agreed upon previous to the union.

“Eighth, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that all laws in force at the time of the union, and that all the courts of civil or ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the respective kingdoms, shall remain as now by law established within the same, subject only to such alterations or regulations from time to time as circumstances may appear to the parliament of the United Kingdom to require.”

“That the foregoing resolutions be laid before his Majesty, with an humble address, assuring his Majesty that we have proceeded with the utmost attention to the consideration of the important objects recommended to us in his Majesty’s gracious message.”

“That we entertain a firm persuasion that a complete and entire union between Great Britain and Ireland, founded on equal and liberal principles, on the similarity of laws, constitution, and government, and on a sense of mutual interests and affections, by promoting the security, wealth, and commerce of the respective kingdoms, and by allaying the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, must afford fresh means of opposing at all times an effectual resistance to the destructive projects of our foreign and domestic enemies, and must tend to confirm and augment the stability, power, and resources of the empire.”

“Impressed with these considerations, we feel it our duty humbly to lay before his Majesty such propositions as appear to us best calculated to form the basis of such a settlement, leaving it to his Majesty’s wisdom, at such time and in such manner as his Majesty, in his parental solicitude for the happiness of his people, shall judge fit, to communicate those propositions to his parliament of Ireland, with whom we shall be at all times ready to concur in all such measures as may be found conducive to the accomplishment of this great and salutary work. And we trust that, after full and mature consideration, such a settlement may be framed and established by the deliberate consent of the parliaments of both kingdoms as may be conformable to the sentiments, wishes, and real interests of his Majesty’s faithful subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, as may unite them inseparably in the full enjoyment of the blessings of our free and invaluable constitution, and in support of the honour and dignity of his Majesty’s crown, and in the preservation and advancement of the welfare and prosperity of the whole British empire.”

Mr. SHERIDAN rose, and spoke to the following effect:—Sir, I know how difficult it always is to make any impression on men’s minds, even by argument and obvious fact, if the imagination has been dwelling with delight on great or difficult subjects, or the attention detained by animated and flowery declamation. The right hon. gentleman, who has just sat down, with a great display of eloquence, introduced this question, and only talents

great as his own could be expected to produce that effect in their exertion, which it is to be apprehended the speech the house has just heard very generally produced. It is, however, easy on some questions to arouse those feelings, in the fullness of which the most vigilant may be deceived, and the most cautious misled. But, much as I admire the right hon. gentleman's talents in debate—indeed, in the same proportion that I do admire those talents, I must critically pursue him in the mazes of his dextrous declamation; I must narrowly watch him from the avenues of national prejudice, up to the source and fountain of national passion. The right hon. gentleman yields to no man in charms of diction, and as beauty captivates sometimes to such a degree that reason is superseded, and the sober calculations of prudence abandoned for the more dazzling, though airy, speculations of a romantic, but fertile, fancy; thus the power of his mind in the selection and application of epithets fascinate the thoughtless, and may seduce the unsuspecting. There are some questions, on the discussion of which it becomes the members of this house to be suspicious of talents* and eloquence, whatever may be the weight of phrase in which declarations of rectitude of intention may be conceived, and in spite of every appearance of honesty of purpose. I hope, sir, the house will not be led away by the seductions of eloquence and the attractive force of talent; but that every man who hears me, every man who cherishes in sincerity a love of freedom, and a genuine respect for the principles of that constitution which, in the purity of its operations, is freedom, that every well-wisher of the British empire, that those who entertain not enmity but friendship towards Ireland, will this night distinguish between the flowing and rapid elocution of an admirable orator, and the steady and well-tempered voice of unaffected reason. The whole world knows that never was there a period when fine speeches more powerfully affected the public; and never a time when, from fancied security or habitual indifference, the public appeared less eager profoundly to examine any question.—Those who cannot be hurried along with the torrent of that impetuous declamation, which more or less excites the astonishment of us all, will, however, pause to recollect the arguments, and pursue the speech of the right hon. gentleman in its elaborate detail. But conceiving, as I do, that the house is not free from the influence ever attained over easy tempers,

by bold and ingenious sophistry, apprehensive that we are in the situation of men who just begin to free themselves, by a collected and vigorous effort, from the chains imposed by beauty, or the seductive allurements of an amorous sportive imagination, I must adjure the house not to dispose of a question that is, perhaps, to decide for ever whether a great and generous nation is to retain its independence, and by implication, to determine whether a set of representatives, chosen by a free people, must vote themselves out of existence, and give up the liberties, the property, the acknowledged constitutional rights of their constituents, to the domination of a power that, under the mask of friendship, has introduced among them a force, originally said to be intended solely for their defence against a daring insidious enemy, whom all deprecate, but who is not more to be detested than the pretended friend, who assists only that he may acquire confidence enough to delude, and strength enough to destroy. I must think the house has been hurried along by the right hon. gentleman from one degree of transport to another, until, in the groves of the elysium, they have been elated with scenes of grandeur, and fatigued with that variety, or enfeebled with that richness of prospect, which is to render inquiry loathsome, and which will inevitably prepare the human mind for the reception of any doctrines, however wild; and any assurance of future advantage, however illusory. I took an opportunity last week of opposing the measure of legislative union with Ireland, in the first stage of the discussion; which, as matter of course, was to lead to that question. I did so then, as well from a conviction that measures of such magnitude and of such novelty should always be opposed in the infancy of their progress, as in the contemplation of what I naturally anticipated would be the effect of the eloquence of the right hon. gentleman. I then said, what I am at this moment prepared to repeat, after much considering the subject, that under the present circumstances of Ireland, in this crisis of her convulsed and necessarily disordered system of policy and general government, it is not only impolitic, but unsafe to urge, nay, even to agitate, the discussion of topics in the issues of which are to be seen developing themselves, the poison and the horrors which are to lay the most hardy and stout of heart prostrate at the feet of a British minister—that are to intimidate and appal the most heroic spirits. Ireland, in her pre-

sent temper, must be beaten into this measure, and that minister who shall make the bold experiment of flogging a whole nation into stupid beings, insensible alike to the duty she may owe to herself, insensible to the rights of the present generation, and the interests of the race yet unborn, as much as to the arrogance and cupidity of those who shall inflict the blow, or direct the torture—such a minister may have secured his minions, but it may not be altogether unbecoming him, if he be desirous ultimately to prevail, to measure his power by the force of his antagonists, and, in the estimation of his means of victory, to seek an antidote against national pride and local attachments. It was after very solemnly and very fully considering these, and matters such as these, that I opposed, on the evening to which I have alluded, the measure at present under discussion; except the right hon. gentleman and a few who sit near him, I scarce suppose there are many persons in the country—I hope but very few members in this house—who have not seen good reason, within this day or two, entirely to change their opinions of this great constitutional question. Seeing the manner in which the subject was brought forward in Ireland, and in the recollection of the fate of the question in the parliament of that kingdom, it might be doubted whether the right hon. gentleman would persevere in the measure; but when we consider how solemnly he has pledged himself, that it should be the favourite object of the remainder of his political life to effect a legislative union of the two kingdoms, that no weight of personal labour, that no loss of popularity, that no opposition of friends, and no clamour of opponents on this, or on the other side of the water, should deter him from pursuing that object, from doing that which he held to be necessary to the preservation of Ireland—necessary, indeed, to the existence of the two countries—we are not to wonder if to this hour he continues to set all experience at defiance; and, in the face of the Irish nation, to spurn the assertion of her rights, to fawn and flatter her guileless mind, and, by seeming to respect her declared, unequivocal opinion, to lull her into inactivity, the more successfully to enslave her for ever. But let not the right hon. gentleman deceive himself, whilst he is exerting his ingenuity to deceive Ireland. Let him remember, sir, that some plots have been so closely wrought, some measures of surprise and delusion so intricately planned, and attempted to be car-

ried into effect with such novelty of means, that the authors, the actors, even the subordinate characters in the drama, have been themselves entangled in the mazes they have contrived for innocence, and overwhelmed under the ruins of that fabric, which they have erected to overawe the independent. The right hon. gentleman has this day not quite given us the same strong pledge of his determination to persevere in the present measure, which on a former day the house received from him. We are even now to take for granted that he will persist in it; but although he may persevere, thank God the house has not given a pledge to support him: and I hope and trust they will not entertain it at all. Sir, the right hon. gentleman has set England and Ireland in a perilous situation. He assumes in argument, and we are to infer that he thinks so in fact, that his power must be committed against the force of opinion in Ireland, and that the existence of Ireland as an independent nation, is incompatible with his existence as a minister. I hope the house will check his rashness: I hope we are not to be precipitated into a war against the feelings, the prejudices, the passions, and against the security of the people of Ireland! The right hon. gentleman has already sown the most frightful dissensions in that unfortunate country. He has divided its parliament against itself. He has held it up to scorn by libelling its measures and traducing its wisdom, and he has yet to array the British parliament against it with all that pertinacity which distinguishes ignorance, and with the fierceness of men who are to be told that a country struggling for its liberties, only wages the war of faction, only wields the weapons of disaffection and treason. I now come to that part of the right hon. gentleman's speech, in which he has commented with such freedom of manner, has combated with such asperity of tone, a speech made some time or other by a right hon. person of the sister kingdom—Mr. Foster. And, sir, if, without breach of order, I could suppose that there is in our gallery a stranger, who has been a member of the legislature of Ireland, or in the habit of hearing its debates, I am persuaded he would at once imagine the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) has detained you and the house almost half an hour to hear him in reply to the speech of that gentleman. Now, sir, I think I can show you that the arguments drawn by the right hon. gentleman opposite to me, from the topics in the speech of the hon. member of the sister

kingdom, do not in any one tittle apply to the present question. He has attempted, indeed, to show the inconsistency of sentiment by which he tells us the conduct of Mr. Foster is to be distinguished. Mr. Foster's opinion was, that the adoption of the commercial propositions was necessary to the existence of Ireland, and that they could not be rejected without incurring the certain risk of sowing dissensions, and of exciting commercial jealousies. This, according to the right hon. gentleman, was that statesman's opinion in 1785, and the inconsistency consists, as he has this night told us, in his having insisted, in his published letters, that the adjustment in 1782 was final. Now, sir, the right hon. gentleman himself entertained the same opinion at the period alluded to, and instead of the tame language of Mr. Foster, that the rejection of those propositions would lead to commercial jealousies, we then had the dashing periods of the chancellor of the exchequer of Great Britain ringing in our ears—that if those propositions were not adopted, he could not continue to hold his situation. Yet neither had any ill consequences arisen to Ireland from the rejection of them, nor had that, which would have been a still greater calamity, befallen the country—the resignation of the right hon. gentleman. Now, how does the argument stand as it really affects Mr. Foster? Why, he imagined that the commercial prosperity of Ireland would be advantaged if those propositions were adopted; and certainly there was no inconsistency of sentiment in this present opposition to legislative union, because the question of the propositions was purely commercial, whilst that of the present period is one which is to decide the independence of the Irish parliament. But, sir, the principal reason why I take up this question now is, that the right hon. gentleman has this evening developed his plan of intimidation and corruption. He says, “that the commercial advantages derived by Ireland from her connections with this country, are necessity to her existence;” and since, in the same breath, he adds, “that to have those advantages continued to her, union is indispensable:” the inference obviously is, that she must abandon all her commercial advantages if she reject the proffered alliance with Great Britain. Hence I do contend, sir, that the people of Ireland cannot come with unbiassed minds to this discussion; and it is impossible to suppose that a free choice is left to the parliament of that country. If we wanted additional corrobora-

tion of the evidence that such is his system, we had it amply afforded us in those parts of his detail which followed. He tells you "Ireland ought to consent to a union, because she is incapable of defending herself against her internal and external enemies without the assistance of her powerful neighbour."—[A cry of "Hear! hear!"]—Mr. Sheridan insisted that the inference was irresistible—that unless she consented to a union, Ireland was to be deprived of all her commercial advantages—was this generous? was it fit to hold out such language to Ireland? was it wise to press the discussion at this moment, and force all Ireland loudly to ask—not indeed free from anger—"why have not we had those advantages yielded to us, on which, according to the opinion of the British minister, our prosperity depends? We must owe it to the injurious policy of Great Britain, exercised in various acts of restraint and privation these three hundred years past, that we have been deprived of those advantages which God and nature so eminently adapts our country to afford us." But, sir, let his Majesty's ministers grant to Ireland those advantages of which they boast—they may be conceded to her without union, they can be improved by her without abjectly surrendering her independence. Thus much with regard to her means of acquiring distinction as a commercial nation. And as to her power of defending herself, does not the right hon. gentleman know that her volunteers have defended Ireland? And what they were equal to in a period of considerable danger, during the American war, when the enemy rode triumphant on their coasts, and in our channel, surely they are at present as capable of achieving in the zenith of our envied superiority as a naval power. It is a most cruel taunt, uttered in the face of the whole people of Ireland, to say, that "while you have forty thousand British troops in the heart of their country, you will awe them by the presence of such a force; reproach them with weakness, notwithstanding that you have had two hundred thousand of her best inhabitants to support you in the present war, while one hundred thousand fighting men of their nation have fallen in your battles in the West Indies and elsewhere. What is this but to say, "it is true you have assisted us, but you are now naked; you are ignorant; you are uncivilized; you are weak; and, if you do not accept from us the benefits we offer you, we will proceed to confer them upon you by force." Look to what the right hon. gen-

tleman says, when he tells you “ he will leave it to the unbiassed judgment of the Irish people, and the independent discretion of the Irish parliament, finally to decide on the present question.” Are the recent dismissals from office in that kingdom the proofs he would exhibit to us of his settled purpose to leave it to that parliament to adopt or reject the measure? It is truly a mockery to tell the parliament this: parliament must see that what has been done in the case of individuals may also be acted over again in the instance of the legislature; and that the same power which effected the dismissal of Sir John Parnell, may be successfully employed to dissolve the parliament. Will gentlemen only be so kind to themselves as to reflect for a moment on the tendency of such proceedings? If in the parliament of the sister kingdom those measures are to be adopted, the same and a worse tyranny may be acted in our own. Sir, I am afraid the political creed of the adherents of the minister in Ireland has been adopted by his supporters in the British senate. I do sincerely believe, that if any one person who now supports his Majesty’s ministers were to vote with me this night, he would be dismissed to-morrow from all his places. We are to reflect on these things, sir, while we carry along our minds to that part of the right hon. gentleman’s speech, where he peremptorily says, “ I do think the measure good for Ireland and good for this country, but time shall be given for the people to examine it—time shall be given for their heats to subside—time shall be given to the parliament of the two countries fully and deliberately to discuss it.”

Now, sir, what do these fine lines of a sentence collectively mean? Why, that time is to be given for the operation of corruption—time to intimidate the people of Ireland—time for the peremptory dismissal of the opposers of the measures—time for the dissolution of parliament. But the right hon. gentleman, in order to conciliate our assent, assures us, that sufficient time shall be allowed to examine his proposals with cool and dispassionate judgment, and that the farther discussion of it in Ireland will not be enforced, until the heats and animosities to which it has already given rise shall have completely subsided; but what is this in reality but to give more time for the renewed operation of corruption, and for a more general display of intimidating measures in the form of new dismissals, against which the Irish parliament may protest in vain? Nor was it the right hon.

gentleman alone who attempted to justify these measures. I have heard them also justified by an hon. friend (Mr. Canning), and never did I hear anything with more poignant regret; for what sensation but that of sorrow and regret could arise in my mind, when I heard that hon. friend plead the cause of bold and barefaced corruption, and thus cloud and contaminate with its foul fog and baneful breath, the pure and early morning of his political life? Would he now tell us that the right hon. gentleman had given a determined pledge, and could not now recede? Why did he? Who called upon him to speak? Was it to encourage his friends in Ireland by a display of his resolution? But that was unavailing, as the discussion and decision took place there before that encouragement could reach them; but as to the charge of urging intimidation, neither the right hon. gentleman nor his hon. friend, who answered me on a former occasion, had thought proper to say a word. His hon. friend (Mr. Canning), from his parliamentary standing, could not, indeed, have taken any part in the violation of the compact in 1782; and therefore his right hon. friend stepped generously forward and claimed all the shame, guilt, and treachery of it to himself. Like another Nisus he threw his broad shield over his beloved Euryclus, to protect him from the vengeful resentment of the Irish nation, calling out to them “*Me, me, I am the man; wreak all your vengeance upon me—*

‘*Me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferum,
O Rutuli; mea fraus omnis; nihil iste nec ausus,
Nec potuit——*’

My hon. friend’s abilities might, however, prove that *potuit*; and, as to his courage, he was satisfied the house had no reason to call that in question. The generous ardour of the right hon. gentleman to protect his hon. friend, was therefore only the impulse of affection—

“*Tantum infelicem nimium diletit amicum.*”

But the right hon. gentleman again repeats, that a union is the only remedy that can heal the evils that afflict Ireland, or that can secure the salvation of both countries. He must, therefore, persist in it, and call on parliament to assist him in the execution of the measure; he is willing, however, to wait for a more favourable opportunity, and until the Irish parliament is convinced of its necessity. And what is that opportunity he pre-

tends to wait for? Is it not the day and hour when Ireland shall be in a greater degree of weakness? Does he wait until he can again reproach her with her inability to defend herself, and threaten her with withdrawing those commercial favours she receives from England, and from which, he contends, are derived all the sources from which her prosperity arises? Alas! it is but too much in his power to create that moment!

Mr. Sheridan then recalled to the recollection of the house, the shameful manner in which Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled from Ireland, at a moment when he was supposed to have been sent over to grant to the Roman catholics the rights and privileges which they claimed. The cup of concession was just presented to their lips, but, instead of permitting them to taste of it, it was dashed in their faces. Was this the proof of a sincere desire to reconcile the Roman catholic body? And if he is acquainted, as surely he is, with the workings of the human heart, must he not be well aware of what men will do when provoked? We all agree, continued Mr. Sheridan, respecting the necessity of a connection between the two countries, and that nothing could be more fatal to either than that Ireland should be possessed by the French. Should we not then seriously consider how far the enforcing of this measure may tend to favour what the right hon. gentleman calls the favourite object of the enemy, and which I really believe to be their earnest wish, namely, the invasion of Ireland? Seeing it, as I do, in this light, have I not every reason and motive for imploring the house not to give it any farther countenance? Indeed, in every view I can take of it, it appears to me not only to be dangerous, but as childish a scheme as that which the right hon. gentleman has chosen to stigmatize so frequently with that epithet.

Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to vindicate Mr. Fox from the accusation of not having followed up the resolution of 1782. He showed that that hon. gentleman remained but two months after in office, and therefore could give it no effect; but did the right hon. gentleman himself, when he came afterwards into power, attempt to bring forward the objections which he had this night so triumphantly urged? Had he not now been fifteen years a minister without ever endeavouring to do that which, from the first, he deemed to be indispensably necessary?

He also affirmed, that an equal proportion of the Irish house

of commons, a large majority of the Irish peers, and an equally large proportion of the people out of doors, were friendly to the measures of a union ; but if he would but look of what that division against it in the commons was composed, he would discover that it contained almost all the country gentlemen ; while, if he examined who composed that on the other side of the question, they would be almost all found to be under the influence of the crown : if, besides this, the dismissals that had taken place, in spite of the fair character of those who were removed thus unjustly from office, it was a shame to speak of anything like an equality between those who opposed and those who supported the proposed union. Now, as to the large proportion of the people out of doors, who are said to be favourable to it, where were they to be found ? He knew of no place but Cork that expressed anything like approbation of it, and, perhaps, Limerick also—but was there not a lure thrown out to the former, that they should have a dockyard built there ? And, on the other hand, was not the linen trade menaced with being deprived of some of the means that tended to encourage it ? Thus, to gain his ends, he held out a bribe to the south, and threw out a threat against the north—some inducements are also held out to the Roman catholics ; a diminution of tithes, and an establishment for their clergy. But what prevents these promises from being now realized ? If it be right to do it, ought it not to be done whether a union is to take place or not, and parliament be enabled, instead of holding out bribes and barter, to win, by these concessions, the affections and confidence of the Irish people ? Another argument strongly urged in favour of the union, is the prosperity which Scotland is said to have enjoyed since it has been united with England : but might not Scotland have attained this increase of wealth and prosperity merely by the dint of her own industry ? Besides, Scotland cannot be well compared with Ireland. In Scotland the gentlemen of property are found to reside, and to encourage trade, &c. ; in Ireland it is the reverse. It is also said, that two independent legislatures may seldom agree ; and, from this want of concurrence and co-operation, the most serious calamities may arise : as well might we say that two independent houses of parliament may not co-operate, because the lords may throw out a money-bill sent from the commons, or the commons may refuse to con-

cur in the amendments made by the lords. The whole of these objections are completely refuted by experience; and to insist upon such objections, would be a libel on the constitution. French principles and jacobinism were, as usual, introduced in the debate, and made the subject of splendid invective. But what was jacobinism? Was it not jacobinism that pretended to make other states more free, independent, and prosperous, than it found them? Was it not jacobinism that called on other countries to resign their freedom, their independence, and their constitutions, with a promise to substitute something better in their place? If so, was not the right hon. gentleman, in proposing the present measure, acting the part of an arch-jacobin?

It is not my intention, sir, to oppose going into a committee, but I shall certainly object to your leaving the chair, for the purpose of moving two resolutions, which I shall, in case the propositions should be carried, wish to have placed before them, for the purpose of taking off, in some degree, that jealousy which the Irish parliament, I am afraid, will be apt to entertain of their passing this house, after the measure of union having been so decidedly rejected in the house of commons of Ireland. Mr. Sheridan then read the following resolutions:—

“That no measures can have a tendency to improve and perpetuate the ties of amity and connection now existing between Great Britain and Ireland, which have not for their basis the manifest, fair, and free consent and approbation of the parliaments of the two countries.

“That whoever shall endeavour to obtain the appearance of such consent and approbation in either country, by employing the influence of government for the purposes of corruption or intimidation, is an enemy to his Majesty and to the constitution.”

The house divided on the question of the speaker's leaving the chair—ayes 140; noes 15. The resolutions were afterwards read in committee.

FEBRUARY 7.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the house to resolve itself into a committee, in order to take into further consideration his Majesty's most gracious message respecting the proposed Union with Ireland.

Mr. SHERIDAN observed that, according to the rules and ordinary proceedings of the house, the right hon. gentleman most

undoubtedly could claim the privilege of moving the order of the day, before he (Mr. Sheridan) could attempt to move the resolutions of which he had thrown out an idea, and his intention of moving them, upon a former occasion; if, therefore, that privilege was insisted on, he must postpone his motion for the present.

Mr. Pitt said that, though he had waited some time in expectation of the hon. gentleman's expected motion, he was nevertheless ready to waive his privilege, and to give the precedence to the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Sheridan then proceeded:—Having, on the two former occasions, in which the present subject was under discussion, trespassed a good deal on the attention of the house, I feel it incumbent upon me to take up as little of their time as possible now. I shall therefore only urge a few of the many reasons which might be advanced in support of the resolutions I intended to move. Indeed, I think it the more incumbent on me to say less at present than I otherwise should, because, though at the commencement of the debates on this measure I had the singularity of standing alone in opposition to the right hon. gentleman's project, yet several gentlemen, knowing what the state of Ireland now is—knowing the irritation produced in the public mind by the agitation of this question—and knowing the marked disapprobation the mere suggestion of the measure has received from the Irish parliament, are now as much convinced as I am of the impropriety of continuing to discuss it here. This consideration I should have hoped would have had some weight with the right hon. gentleman, and have taught him not to persist in that pledge which he so boldly gave in the course of the first debate on this subject. The right hon. gentleman has declared, that to accomplish a union of the two kingdoms shall be the object of his life—not his political life, as on former occasions he has pledged—but his natural life. Happily, however, this house was as yet pledged to nothing, and I trust they will not join the right hon. gentleman in this. They cannot be mistaken with regard to his object, for he has fairly and candidly acknowledged it. The house will, however, do well to pause before they advance farther. As yet they have done no more than to refer to a committee on his Majesty's message, recommending it to the house to consider of the means of strengthening the connection between the two countries. The resolutions which the right

hon. gentleman have moved are not yet ordered to be printed. Here the house have it in their power to stop: but the case is different if they proceed farther. The question now before us is, whether we are willing to second the pledge which the right hon. gentleman has given of devoting his life to carry this favourite project; a pledge, as I have already observed, not of his political, but of his natural life?—(Here Mr. Pitt smiled.)—Yes, the right hon. gentleman may smile at his pledges! Does he smile that they should be thought sincere? I know that he has before now pledged himself to perform many things which he has not yet found it convenient to accomplish. When the Irish propositions were brought forward, the right hon. gentleman declared, that unless they were agreed to, he could not continue in office, because he could no longer be an useful minister. These propositions were, however, rejected, and the right hon. gentleman smiled at the pledge. He still remained in office, and had of course discovered that there was no necessity for keeping his pledge, since he could be an useful minister without the Irish propositions. I know not how he means to dispose of his present pledge. He may smile at it if he please; but will the people of Ireland smile with him? The right hon. gentleman has before now often duped the people with his pledges, and he may, perhaps, think proper at last to abandon this: be this as it may, however, nothing could have worse consequences, nothing could so much tend to increase the evils which at present exist in Ireland, as this house sanctioning the present pledge of the right hon. gentleman. The effect of the pledge which the right hon. gentleman has given, must, however, be considerable on the people of Ireland. It will produce much irritation, and inflame all those discontents which have already occasioned so much misery in that country. Were it adopted by this house, the mischief would still be greater. It is, indeed, very difficult to conceive what object he proposes to himself by proceeding in this measure. What advantage will his argument of the necessity of a union receive from the house joining in his pledge, when the Irish house of commons has already decided against it? If the house sanctions the project of the right hon. gentleman, the two houses of commons of Great Britain and Ireland will be placed in opposition to each other, and the situation of these nations will be more alarming and frightful than that in which

any two countries, professing amity for each other, ever before stood.

Does the right hon. gentleman not know, that while he declares his determination to persist in this measure, the Irish people will fancy they can easily penetrate the means to which he will resort to carry it? On this point, indeed, they cannot be easily deceived. The right hon. gentleman has declared himself openly, and the measures to which he has already had recourse so plainly indicate his intentions, that there is little room for doubt or mistake on this head. If he do not succeed on the present occasion, the people of Ireland must be convinced that he only waits for a more favourable opportunity: they must know that he only waits for a moment when Ireland shall be more weak, to carry his favourite project, and that intimidation and corruption are the engines he proposes to use. The means to which he would resort must be known the moment that he declares he will persevere. But it ought to be recollected that the Irish parliament do not look upon their connection with us as a boon—they claim to be independent. If, then, the right hon. gentleman has sincerely pledged himself, there is no other course left for Ireland to take, but to guard against the influence and the power of the British parliament. It has been observed, that Ireland cannot exist without the support of this country; and a noble friend of the right hon. gentleman has held out a threat of withdrawing from Ireland that protection to which she is indebted for her safety, and without which she neither could defend herself against a foreign enemy, nor survive intestine warfare. Thus the people of Ireland were plainly told what was to be the consequence of their refusing to surrender their independent legislature. The house then were to put the two countries in this situation, the most perilous and frightful in which it is possible they could be placed! Such, however, must be the consequence of the house joining in the pledge of the right hon. gentleman.

It is curious to observe the arguments which the right hon. gentleman and his friends have, on this occasion, used in support of the measures they wish to carry into effect. One would be tempted to think that the right hon. gentleman had formed a coalition with the party he has long been accustomed to reprobate; a party which lately attempted to accomplish, by the force

of arms, what is now endeavoured to be brought about by intrigue—I mean the United Irishmen, with whom the right hon. gentleman seems to be perfectly agreed in five or six of their leading principles. The United Irishmen wished to destroy the present constitution of Ireland; this is also the object of the right hon. gentleman. The United Irishmen declared the parliament of Ireland to be the cause of all the evils and of all the miseries with which that country had been afflicted. The right hon. gentleman has brought forward the same accusation against them. The United Irishmen charged the legislature of their country with being the dupe of the English party: the right hon. gentleman, following their example on this point, also ascribes every misrule, every error of government, all the distractions, and all the misfortunes of Ireland, to the influence of a British faction over the parliament of Ireland. It is not, indeed, to the faction which he heads there, he ascribes this influence; but he has asserted that it was exerted by one, at the head of which the Duke of Portland stood, and of which his hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham) near him was a member. He has told us that that faction made a tool of the Irish parliament to answer its own purposes; and the United Irishmen have repeatedly made the same assertion: thus they are agreed as to the evil. They are agreed as to the remedy, for they both prescribe a revolution—*Delanda est Carthago* is the maxim of both. The Irish parliament, they agree, must be destroyed, and this is made the grand cure. The United Irishmen and the right hon. gentleman have proposed to apply their remedy, however, in somewhat a different manner. He would incorporate a few of the representatives of the people of Ireland in the British parliament. With respect to the means by which these measures were to be carried into effect, they are also very much alike. The United Irishmen said, “they knew better what was good for Ireland than all the rest of the people of Ireland did:” the right hon. gentleman has said the same thing of himself: like him, too, the United Irishmen did not scruple to make use of corruption to gain their object; they resorted to force and intimidation; the right hon. gentleman has done the same. The only difference between the two was, that the United Irishmen conceiving their parliament to be the mere tools of England, were for deposing it, and setting

up a republican form of government with foreign assistance ; while the right hon. gentleman was for merging down the Irish representation into that of England. His plan, as well as theirs, proposes the extinguishing the parliament of Ireland, and the means he uses to insure himself success, are the same as those to which they resorted. The question, then, which we have now to consider is, whether a British parliament will second the right hon. gentleman in his project, and sanction this similarity between him and the leaders of that rebellion, which the house lately so much deplored.

It was once observed by an hon. friend of mine, in speaking of an hon. gentleman in this house, that he had a temper so pugnacious and so obstinate, that if he saw two persons fighting in the streets he would never think of separating them, but would rather insist that they should go on and fight it out. This was said by an amateur of the art of pugilism, at a time when that honourable science was held in greater repute than it is now. But with whatever truth it may have been said, I should hope that no secretary at war would wish to see a legislative battle of the kind with which we are now threatened, but that he would rather wish to separate the combatants when he should know that they were the Irish parliament and the British chancellor of the exchequer. Let the battle, however, be fought when it may, it will not be uninteresting. Each party is well seconded. The chancellor of the exchequer has two allies—corruption and intimidation. The people of Ireland have two allies also—honour and resolution—honour to resist the corruption, and resolution to laugh at the intimidation of the right hon. gentleman.

We have been told, that the existence of Ireland depends upon this project being carried. This I certainly do deny. The proposition has not, and never can be made out ; but it is a melancholy consideration that the right hon. gentleman should still obstinately persist in his scheme, after the solemn manner in which it has been rejected by the parliament of Ireland ; and after he knows in what detestation it has been held by the great majority of the people of that country. If the right hon. gentleman continue still in the same temper, and if this house adopt his plan, the people of Ireland may naturally be expected to resort, and they ought to resort, to every method of precaution calculated

to defeat the right hon. gentleman's scheme, and to oppose the influence which he would exercise over them by the weight and example of the British parliament.

Much has been said upon the corruption and misgovernment of the Irish parliament; and it is not a little extraordinary that these imputations, so congenial to the sentiments of United Irishmen, should come from those mouths which not long since poured forth eulogiums on that very parliament which they now so grossly libel. I am far from pretending that the Irish parliament is free from all blame. I do not mean to say that it has never neglected its duty, nor over-stretched its power. I ascribe to it no infallibility; but when the right hon. gentleman has so lately pronounced that parliament, which he now censures, the saviour of Ireland—when he has, through the medium of the viceroy, congratulated them on the suppression of an insurrection, and on the defeat of an invading enemy, I may be allowed to state it as an argument against the right hon. gentleman, that, after giving the parliament of Ireland credit for doing so much good to the country, he has no right, and indeed he cannot, with consistency, charge them with corruption and misrule, and contend that this new charge of his shows the necessity of the measures he wishes the house to agree to. I must say, however, that were I asked whether the parliament of Ireland may not sometimes have fallen into errors; whether many of the evils which exist in the present situation of Ireland, and much of the distress of the people, might not have been remedied by them? these are propositions which I perhaps should not be inclined to deny; but I shall always contend that a union is not the cure for the evils that are complained of, and that a British legislature can never correct the political defects, or remove the distresses of Ireland so well and so effectually as its own legislature. To maintain his position, the right hon. gentleman is condemned to show that the state of Ireland would have this day been better than it now is, if a union had taken place at a former period: he must prove to us that the adoption of his measure would have prevented insurrection, silenced all discontents, united all the discordant interests, and conciliated all the exasperated feelings and irritable passions of the country; unless he do this, his case is not made out, and upon this ground I am willing to rest the merits of the discussion.

Doubtless there is much to be done in the way of reform and improvement in Ireland ; but to do this it surely is not necessary to pull down the credit and authority of parliament. I should not have expected this conduct from the right hon. gentleman, whom I have so often heard declaim against all hasty alterations in forms of government, and that spirit of innovation which is proved to overthrow, instead of propping and repairing, ancient institutions: I should not have expected that he would be the first to lay violent hands upon the Irish parliament. Bad as he has represented that parliament, and however blamable it may have been, it has certainly recovered much of its credit and character by the noble stand it has made in the defence of the liberties and independence of the country.

The argument that the right hon. gentleman and his friend used, when they asserted that a union was indispensable to the continuation of the connection between the two countries, I cannot admit. I deny what has been so positively asserted, that we have no alternative but division and separation, or union. The real alternative is, that the Irish government should no longer continue to be a corrupt English job. Is it meant to be asserted that there is some innate depravity in the Irish character which renders them unfit to have a parliament of their own? No, the cause of the corruption which has been complained of is obvious—the government of Ireland has been made a job for the advantage of English ministers; this is the corruption—this is the evil that has pervaded it from first to last; but before Ireland be required to surrender her independence, let at least a trial be made of what can be done by an honest Irish parliament—by a parliament uninfluenced by a British minister—by a parliament having the interest and the happiness of Ireland for its object, and looking to Irish prosperity and Irish gratitude for its reward. Let it not be a parliament looking to St. James's only, but one that shall have the advantage of the country constantly in view. Let this experiment at least be tried before the annihilation of the Irish parliament be proposed. I am certain that nothing can be done in this way which would not tend to strengthen the bonds that unite the two countries: and I deny that we are driven to the alternatives stated by the right hon. gentleman. In the position in which the two countries are now imprudently placed, if there were a disposition to separation, that disposition must be

greatly increased. The right hon. gentleman holds out that Ireland is helpless and dependent: he threatens the country with a measure that it detests, and drives the people to take every precaution against the corruption and the intimidation with which he menaces them. The right hon. gentleman has displayed much eloquence in describing the political defects of the government of Ireland, but he will not succeed in persuading the people that all the advantages he promises them from a union cannot be as fully enjoyed under a parliament in their own country. It seems to be a favourite maxim with the right hon. gentleman and his friends, that it is not possible there can be a good government in Ireland. The absurdity of this assertion is too obvious to require any refutation. On a former occasion, I observed that the character and habits of the people of Ireland were such as would render the removal of their legislature fatal to their industry, and ruinous to the nation. Indeed, it is my confirmed opinion, that if ever there was a country in which a tangible, visible, and resident government was necessary, that country is Ireland. The right hon. gentleman has told us, that Ireland will obtain great commercial advantages in consequence of a union—why not give Ireland these advantages without a union? He has told us that the situation of the catholics and the dissenters will be improved; but he has not said why these ameliorations must not take place without a union. If, indeed, Ireland is to be regarded as a conquered country, then there is an end to all arguments of this kind. If gentlemen proceed upon this principle, they should come boldly forward and state it.

I have already said so much on this subject, that it is not necessary for me now to detain the house by any farther argument against the project of the right hon. gentleman; but I cannot help noticing a very singular answer which was given to one of the most important objections against a union. It is generally admitted that the distress and poverty of the lower orders in Ireland is, in a great measure, owing to the number of absentees. This evil, it was observed, would be increased by a union. A noble lord has, however, asserted that a union would not increase the number of absentees, but that, on the contrary, it would make them reside more on their estates than they now do. He contends that the importance of a seat in the imperial legislature will make the Irish landlords anxious to cultivate the affections of their

tenants. This, instead of conciliating, seems rather calculated to insult the feelings of the people. They were to be told when the absentee came to canvass, that he was not now soliciting a seat in the puny and miserable house of commons of their own country, but in the imperial legislature: this is, however, a very singular argument, since the object of it is to prove that men become kinder landlords in proportion as their legislative duty places them at a greater distance from their tenants; that they will be better neighbours, in consequence of only visiting their estates once in twelve months, and that they will all at once become humane, generous, and benevolent, from the worst of motives. It is surely no great compliment to the gentlemen of Ireland; to state that they are only likely to do good from motives such as these. The noble lord must certainly have a very high idea of the impression that will be made upon the Irish members when they enter this imperial house. He, perhaps, pictures to himself the hundred Irish knights struck dumb with astonishment and awe: he, doubtless, imagines that they will all possess the kind of diffidence which used to distinguish the former speakers of this house, who were always forced into the chair, until you, sir, set another example. The noble lord possibly expects that it will be necessary to order the serjeant-at-arms to force the Irish members into the imperial house, and that they will be confounded, that they will actually crawl in upon all fours; and all this the noble lord tells us will make them kinder landlords and better neighbours. This sort of argument is not very well calculated to conciliate the good will of the Irish; it would rather irritate and provoke them; but it is needless to dwell longer on this; the Irish are not so dull and stupid a race as not to see its tendency, although it were not pointed out to them. I shall therefore take up the time of the house no longer, but proceed to make the motion of which I have given notice. I believe there are few that will not agree to the first part of the resolution. It contains a truism, which, if the right hon. gentleman had not already declared he would oppose, I should not have expected to have been objected to by any one, whether their sentiments be for or against the measure. The right hon. gentleman has observed that the resolution was unnecessary; I trust the house will be of a different opinion. The right hon. gentleman cannot but know that it has always been the practice of parliament, when

they expected any infraction of the constitution, to mark, by a solemn resolution, their disapprobation of the attempt, following up the resolution with a pledge, that if the attempt should be persisted in, punishment would be inflicted on those who should be found guilty.

Mr. Sheridan then moved the following resolutions:—

“ That no measures can have a tendency to improve and perpetuate the ties of amity and connection now existing between Great Britain and Ireland, which have not for their basis the manifest, fair, and free consent of the two countries.

“ That whoever shall endeavour to obtain the appearance of such consent and approbation in either country, by employing the influence of government, for the purposes of corruption and intimidation, is an enemy to his Majesty and the constitution.”

*Mr. Pitt moved the previous question, and upon which the house divided—
ayes 141 ; noes 25.*

A debate then followed on a motion for the speaker leaving the chair.

Mr. Sheridan said, that after having resumed the question at so great a length in the former part of this evening, it was not his intention to have troubled them again ; but that some parts of the right hon. gentleman's speech, in answer to his hon. friend (Mr. Grey), required that he should request the attention of the house to their fallacy, as well as the failure of the right hon. gentleman's promises respecting them. He then showed that the right hon. gentleman had pledged himself to answer Mr. Grey's speech, and had but slightly touched on any part of it—had charged him with uttering inconsistencies, not one of which he had been able to point out. Mr. Sheridan then noticed some parts of the right hon. gentleman's speech which appeared to him very extraordinary ; and began by alluding to the latter part of his speech first. The right hon. gentleman laid great stress on the necessity of the union, from the determination of the French to use their utmost exertions for the separation of the two countries ; but he denied that the measure could have the desired effect, or in the least to cause the French to desist or relax in their designs, because he contended that the French had never built their hopes, in the smallest degree, on the separation of the two legislatures, as had been inferred by the right hon. gentleman ; but, on the contrary, had all along rested their hopes

on the desires and discontents of the great body of the people. If, therefore, these resolutions, were pushed forward at the present moment, contrary to the sense of the Irish parliament, as well as to that of the people, the French would have greater cause than ever to resume and redouble their exertions, and to irritate farther the minds of the Irish nation, as well as the parliament, on the subject to which they were so feelingly alive ; and would, he feared, be attended with the most mischievous consequences. The right hon. gentleman, he said, had built his argument very much on the discontents in Ireland being founded on the excluded situation of the catholics, and had held it out by the way of lure, that if Ireland came under the regulation of an incorporated and imperial parliament, their situation might be altered for the better. But, unfortunately for the right hon. gentleman's argument, another part of his speech proved how little they had to expect on that head ; for he had shown that the British parliament, without the same excuse of that body in Ireland, forming three-fourths of the community, and, therefore, without the dread of their participation of equal privileges with the protestants being attended with that danger to the supremacy of the protestant interest, had acted far more illiberally towards the catholics than the parliament of Ireland, under all the inequalities attending their members, had ever done. He then asked to what must this be attributed ? “ To the influence,” said he, “ of the English councils—can it be attributed to the Irish parliament ? ” He denied that it could ; for it was evident, during the viceroyalty of Lord Fitzwilliam, that the measure had been announced as intended to be carried into effect, and that the Irish parliament had never shown or expressed any alarm at it, nor any intention of opposing it ; and, he had no doubt, had not that noble personage been so abruptly and unaccountably recalled, the measure would have passed the Irish parliament. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) has said, “ that all he wished for was time ; ” and on some expression of countenance or motion of body which had been made by him, the right hon. gentleman had inferred that he meant to gain time for the purposes of corruption or intimidation. He confessed the right hon. gentleman was right in his conjecture ; he did mean so ;—he did intend to signify by the shrug, or whatever other gesture he used, that the time wished for by the right hon. gentleman, was meant to be

used for the same ends and purposes as had been effected with the Duke of Hamilton, when he was brought off from his opposition, without which the Scotch union would not have taken place. The right hon. gentleman had said "he wished to treat with Ireland on equal terms;" but he (Mr. Sheridan) denied that that was possible in the present situation of Ireland—for, surrounded as they were with English troops, which were said to be necessary for their defence, and depending, as it had been said, on the British parliament for the continuance of their commercial advantages, they could not be in a situation to give a free assent. The right hon. gentleman had said he made no reflection on the Irish parliament, but he had certainly described them in a most confined and pitiful point of view. The right hon. gentleman had, however, discovered one peculiar privilege with which Ireland had been gifted by nature, and that was, she was surrounded by the sea. With this extraordinary advantage, however, he would advise the Irish parliament to give up the narrow and contracted sphere in which they exercised their independence, in order to expand their views, and enlarge their consequence by transplanting themselves into the imperial parliament, where they would derive so many advantages. "Yes, sirs," said he, "where they will derive the advantage of quitting the parliament where their chancellor of the exchequer was turned out of his place for acting according to the dictates of his conscience and what he deemed the interests of his country, and be transplanted to the imperial parliament, where they will behold a chancellor of the exchequer whom no human power is likely to turn out of his situation." They might, perhaps, have the farther advantage of being transplanted into the imperial parliament, of coming into an equal participation of the share in £400,000,000 of debt owing by this country.—[Here a cry of "No, no."] Mr. Sheridan then said, that after what he had many times heard of the competence and omnipotence of parliament, there was no safeguard that he knew of, after the lengths the argument had been carried, that could be depended upon against their breaking or annulling any compact they might at any time choose to enter into on that or any other subject. The right hon. gentleman had been very diffuse in describing the benefits which Scotland had derived from the union; and, indeed, on a measure which professed to have for its object the effecting the peace and tranquillity of a

nation ; the speech of the right hon. gentleman had one very eligible feature—it was fraught with a considerable degree of pleasantry and good humour. But this good humour and pleasantry might be assumed, for the purpose of deceiving the house into an opinion that the question was not of that serious and important nature which it ought, in his opinion, to be viewed in. The right hon. gentleman had very facetiously, in leaning over the table, favoured the house with the recitals of several predictions of a Lord Belhaven, in one of which he says, “that Mother Caledonia was stabbed by Julius Cæsar. Now,” said he, “Lord Belhaven might have remembered that Julius Cæsar was stabbed by Brutus: and supposing that Mother Caledonia was about to be stabbed by her sons, he might have confined her assassination to the stabbing of Julius Cæsar; but that he could predict that Mother Caledonia would be stabbed by Julius Cæsar, was truly preposterous.” From this inaccuracy, he thought he might fairly infer, that there was not much truth in the statements of the right hon. gentleman relative to the manifesto of the Pretender. The right hon. gentleman had said, “that he had been obliged to strike out a part of it which promised a repeal of the union.” On his asking him across the table, if it was true? the right hon. gentleman had answered, “he had read it somewhere.” Now, said Mr. Sheridan, I have been frequently credibly informed, that the fact was exactly the reverse. However, be this as it may, Ireland may receive all these benefits without a union; and to prove this, he had only to appeal to the rapid and incalculable growth of the prosperity of the Irish commerce since she had gained her political independence. The right hon. gentleman had asserted that the majority of the Irish parliament was trifling, as it amounted only to five; but he contended that when the nature of that majority, consisting of the men it was composed of, contrasted with the minority, composed of placemen, it was a prodigious and weighty majority indeed. He then proceeded to notice what had recently fallen from Mr. Dundas, relative to the motion made by Mr. George Ponsonby, and denied the right hon. gentleman’s inference, that it was rejected. He contended that it was only withdrawn, and that upon the argument of, “why press it at this moment, when it may be entirely useless?” The English minister will think of pressing this business, after he knows the decision of the Irish parliament; for the present,

therefore, do not urge the question." On this, said Mr. Sheridan, the motion was withdrawn; but when the intention of the minister comes to be known, I have no doubt but it will be immediately resumed. I now come, said Mr. Sheridan, to a point which I cannot avoid taking notice of on the present occasion—I mean the competency of the Irish parliament to discuss the matter. The right hon. gentleman opposite to me has talked of "a sovereignty in abeyance in the people," and denied it on the ground that, if it was allowed, all the acts passed by the parliament, such as the septennial act, the act of union, &c., are nullities—that you, sir, sitting in that chair, are a usurper; that we are all usurpers who hold seats in this house. Sir, I deny this doctrine; I say there is a sovereignty in abeyance in the people; and if there is not, I contend that the present family on the throne are usurpers—the practice of the revolution clearly shows the force of the argument. When James II. abdicated the crown, the parliament did not proceed to do any act of itself for settling the crown, but expressly called a convention, which the Lord Mayor of London and fifty commoners were invited to attend. All the members who had sat in the parliament of Charles II. were also summoned; and every step which could be taken in the then pressing exigency of affairs, was actually taken to show that the appointment to the crown was in the people, and in them only. Mr. Sheridan urged his part of the argument with great force and ability in several points of view, and concluded by moving his hearty negative to the speaker's leaving the chair.

The house divided—for the speaker's leaving the chair 149; against it 24.

FEBRUARY 11.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the house going into a committee for the further consideration of his Majesty's message, which being read, and the speaker having moved that the same be taken into consideration,

MR. SHERIDAN rose and said, it was not his intention at present to oppose the speaker's leaving the chair, for the purpose of preventing the house resuming the consideration of his Majesty's message. He did, indeed, understand that an hon. friend of his, now in the country, had an intention of coming down to the house for that purpose. The severity of the wea-

ther had, however, probably prevented him from executing that intention. Had that hon. friend been present, he should certainly have thought it incumbent upon him to give him all the support in his power; because, from every account that had come to his knowledge of the temper and proceedings of the people and parliament of Ireland, since the subject of union had been first agitated, he felt a sincere conviction that the most beneficial service he could perform for both countries would be to throw every possible obstacle in the way of the resolutions which had been brought forward by the right hon. gentleman. But having already, on several occasions, argued at considerable length against the principle of the measure, it certainly was not his intention, in the absence of his hon. friend, to oppose the house going into a committee. He only rose at present to move an instruction to the committee, which he conceived to be strictly consistent with the object of his Majesty's message, and likely to accomplish that object in a more effectual mode than that of a union. He was apprized that it was in his power to suggest in the committee any other plan for consolidating the interest of the British empire, and healing the distractions of Ireland, than that which had been avowed by the minister; for, though the house had twice decided that the speaker should leave the chair upon the question of going into the committee, the project of union had not yet been sanctioned by either the committee or the house. But it was on this very account that he chose the present time for bringing it forward, as it might have the effect of preventing the farther discussion of a project which every consideration of sound policy induced him to deprecate. As the right hon. gentleman, however, was, by the forms of the house, entitled to a pre-audience, he would not now go into any detail of argument to prove that the instruction he intended to move was such as the house ought to adopt, but would merely state it as a proposition which was fairly entitled to the consideration of the committee. This proposition was no less than that all the advantages which were professed to be expected from a union, would be more certainly attained by the parliament of Great Britain setting the example of abolishing all civil incapacities on account of religious distinctions. He did not mean that any should be taken for that purpose, which should have the appearance of trenching upon the independence of the Irish parliament; on the contrary, he had

taken care to word his motion so as to avoid any such construction. He intended that its operation should be left entirely to the force of example, which, aided by the stronger necessity that existed for its application in the unhappy circumstances of the sister kingdom, would, he had no doubt, speedily incline the independent legislature of that country to its spontaneous adoption. He did not conceive that the right hon. gentleman, upon an impartial view of all these circumstances, would contend that the time was improper for such a measure. Whether its fitness at the present crisis would, or would not, be disputed, it possessed this recommendation at least, that it was considered by his Majesty's ministers, in 1795, to be a measure of prudence, safety, and indispensable necessity. To anticipate any general objection that might be made to it, he would beg leave to quote the declaration of a noble earl, as expressed in a passage or two of a publication which he had in his hand, and the whole contents of which that noble earl offered to prove in the house of lords.—[Here Mr. Sheridan read an extract from Earl Fitzwilliam's letter to Lord Carlisle, stating the agreement of the Duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt in the opinion, that the emancipation of the catholics was necessary for the preservation of Ireland; and that though it was thought more advisable to delay the measure until a period of greater tranquillity, yet that, if brought forward, he was authorised to give it a handsome support on the part of government.] Thus the measure which he wished to be given in instruction to the committee, was then considered by the gentlemen opposite to him to be consonant to the principles of sound policy and justice; and, if pressed by the catholics, was to receive the handsome support of the government of Ireland. He would be glad to know, whether the events which had since happened in that distracted country, and all of which had been predicted by Earl Fitzwilliam, were not such as to induce the right hon. gentleman to regret, from the bottom of his heart, that he had not permitted the measure to be brought forward at that time. If he should say, after witnessing the melancholy and alarming consequences of the recall of that nobleman, that he still felt no regret at the proceeding of the British cabinet, the house and the whole country would certainly hear that avowal with astonishment. Considerations of much weightier importance than any that could arise from mere

curiosity, required that the right hon. gentleman should explain the motives of that sudden change in his sentiments. If he could judge by his present gestures, indeed, he seemed to indicate that there had been no change. The natural inference then was, that when he appeared to countenance the scheme of emancipation, he never entertained any idea of carrying it into execution, and that he sent over Lord Fitzwilliam merely to dupe the Irish catholics for a time, to suit his own purpose. To this conclusion, however, it was not very probable that the right hon. gentleman would accede, for it would incur a much stronger imputation on his character than an acknowledgment that he had changed his mind upon the question of emancipation, in consequence of unfitness of time, or change of circumstances. But either he must submit to that imputation, or it would be incumbent on him to show very strong reasons for suddenly abandoning a measure which, on the same noble authority, he was stated to have admitted to be of more service to the British empire than anything that could happen short of union. This, by the way, was the first occasion upon which union was hinted at, as preferable to catholic emancipation; and showed how long the present project had been floating in his mind, though he had not till now found what he conceived to be a fit opportunity for urging it. Had the right hon. gentleman attempted to prove that all the efforts of the Irish parliament would be ineffectual to the extinction of religious feuds and political discontents; had he shown that the parliament itself was hostile to its proposal, or that the opposition to it among the Protestant classes of Ireland was so general, as, if it were persisted in, to produce those very evils which it was intended to prevent; then would it be thought no ways surprising that he had changed his opinion, nor would he have any reason to disavow the change. But it was not probable that he would use any such arguments as these, in opposition to the strong evidence of facts. The primary object of Lord Fitzwilliam's administration was, from the first moment of his landing in Ireland, avowed to be the complete emancipation of the catholics. It was known by every member of the Irish parliament, and to every man in the country; it was equally well known that it constituted the avowed ground of Lord Fitzwilliam's recall; and yet so far was it from exciting their displeasure, that there never was a lord lieutenant who left Ireland

accompanied with testimonies of more general regret for his departure than Lord Fitzwilliam. The right hon. gentleman had broadly stated, that it was frivolous to assert that the settlement of 1782 was final, or to suppose that it was then intended that the connection between the two countries should be entirely left upon that footing, that the evils which had since arisen could be no otherwise radically cured than by a union, and that this remedy, if not adopted now, might be put off *ad Græcas kalendas*. Was it to be inferred from this, that abandoning all idea of the necessity of the free consent of the Irish nation, and considering their representatives as worthy of being put in strait waistcoats, he would proceed at once to cram it down their throats? He had said, that he wished to wait for a moment of calm, when the irritation occasioned by the first view of the measure should subside, and its many advantages could be impartially considered: yet his conduct was in direct contradiction to this principle, for he loudly talked of the necessity of an immediate remedy. There was an opposition between his professions and proceedings, which was apparently inexplicable. If the right hon. gentleman would avow that he designed to carry it by coercion, his anxiety to have his resolutions carried would then excite no surprise. But if it was his real intention to wait for the result of calm and temperate discussion in the Irish parliament, what security could he give that the adoption of it would not equally be put off *ad Græcas Kalendas*? The remedy of an union was then contingent and precarious, if, indeed, there remained any hope of its being adopted. But that which his motion contained was of present use, and whether applied by the British parliament or the Irish parliament, in the first instance, would be productive of the most beneficial effects. The right hon. gentleman expressed a hope, that the Irish house of commons would resume the consideration of the measure, in a calm and dispassionate temper. He likewise entertained the same expectation. It was not very likely, indeed, that they would take it up again with much fervour, when they reflected upon the strange terms that had been used in that house as applicable to their proceedings, such as intoxication, wolves, &c. But he hoped they would re-consider those prejudices which led them to reject the claims of the catholics, and generously admit them to a share of the little they had in their power to give.

He hoped they would reflect, that catholic exclusion was the cause of their own weakness, and had been made a reason of wresting from them their independence. Such were his expectations from the fair and manly manner in which Mr. Barrington and several other members had confessed their former errors. The right hon. gentleman might well seem surprised at this public confession of error; for certainly it could not be laid to his charge, that he had ever made any recantation in words, however frequently he had done so in deeds. He hoped the Irish parliament would reflect upon how little they could impart to the catholic, which was no more than the power of sitting with themselves, and being admitted to a share of a few offices; and to this would join the reflection that Britain and Ireland were now almost the only countries in Europe where civil exclusion was still maintained on account of religious distinctions. They would reflect, that if the Irish catholic acquired the possession of property, it must be through the medium of that industry which would civilize his habits, and fit him for becoming a peaceful and valuable member of the community. When they dispassionately viewed the effects that had arisen in many parts of the continent from the abolition of religious feuds; when they reflected, that in some of them the two great sects of protestants and catholics harmonised so far as to have a regular interchange of worship, and that in all questions of civil policy their interests were invariably united, he hoped they would cast off those absurd prejudices which induced them to consider their catholic brethren as the advocates of foreign supremacy in their civil as well as religious concerns. They would particularly see the absurdity of entertaining any fears from what a pope could do at this time of day. Wretched and abandoned as was the present situation of that old man, he was convinced, that if any person were to inform him that, in any land in the Atlantic Ocean, the dread of his authority had been made the pretext for excluding more than three millions of men from the most valuable privileges of civil existence, he would feel some consolation that the misery to which himself was now reduced, deprived their oppressors of that argument. He had no doubt that they would re-consider the question, but he had as little doubt that the effect would not be favourable to a union. He had no doubt that they would see they were now brought to the alternative of

sacrificing either their independence or their prejudices; that they must make either a union of affection and interests with the catholics, or enter into a false and hollow union with England. He hoped the time was now come when, forgetful of their party differences, the seeds of animosity would be for ever extirpated from the bosoms of both parties, and when the protestant would, stretch forth the hand of reconciliation, dry up the tears, and pour balm into the wounds of his bleeding catholic brother. He felt a firm conviction that a union like this, while it rung the departing knell of religious discord and religious broil, would, at the same time, if cherished and matured by a wise co-operation, tend more to strengthen the connection between Great Britain and Ireland than any other that could be suggested. He would not trouble the house with any farther arguments, but would conclude with moving—

“That it be an instruction to the committee to consider how far it would be consistent with justice and policy, and conducive to the general interests, and especially to the consolidation of the strength of the British empire, were civil incapacities, on account of religious distinction, to be done away throughout his Majesty’s dominions.”

Mr. Pitt replied. The speaker observed that if the house were of opinion that the tenor of his Majesty’s message did not warrant the introduction of the motion, to discuss it at present was certainly irregular. If on the other hand it did come within the power of the committee, it was not regular as at present worded. It was necessary that some such words as “that it be an instruction to the committee in the first instance,” &c.

Mr. Sheridan said, he had not the least objection to withdraw his motion for the present, but he would assent to the proposed amendment, for the purpose of having it in his power to make some comments on what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman opposite. He thought it very strange language to tell a member of that house, that he was not serious in the arguments which he pressed upon its attention. But probably the right hon. gentleman only ascribed to him what he felt to be too much the habit of his own mind, and what he thought to be more general than he would find upon candid examination. Nothing could be more silly than to say that he attacked the independence of the Irish parliament. This was a very strange comment upon his motion, by a man who had himself brought

forward resolutions tending to procure a total surrender of that independence. He had argued that it was unsafe to grant catholic emancipation without union. He would then ask, why he had authorized Lord Fitzwilliam to promise it—why he had raised that expectation in the minds of the catholics, of the fallacy of which he had since endeavoured to convince them by a system of cruel massacre and torture of every denomination?—(Here a cry of “hear, hear.”)—He would repeat it, that he considered the right hon. gentleman, and those who had supported him with a mercenary confidence, as the authors of all the calamities which had befallen that unhappy country.—(“Hear, hear.”)—The house, in adopting his motion, would only repeat the sentiments of his Majesty’s ministers in 1795, and give greater effect to the pledge which they had then given. He concluded with saying, that it was not his intention at present to take the sense of the house upon the subject, though he should think it incumbent upon him to bring it forward in some other way.

Mr. Sheridan’s motion was put and negatived without a division.

Mr. Pitt next moved that the speaker leave the chair. A debate ensued.

Mr. Sheridan said, he was surprised to see so much pains employed to prove that there existed a pledge to do something farther, in consequence of the adjustment of 1782, as he could not discover that ministers could derive any aid to their argument by fixing such a pledge on the parliament of either country. It appeared to him rather to be a disadvantage to the argument they maintained, as parliament would not be so free to act as if there had been no pledge. This house had recognised Ireland to be independent by an act as solemn as the bill of rights; the Irish address, entered upon the journals of the house, declared, that their separate legislature was essential to their liberties; and was it consistent then to enter on the journals a set of resolutions directly contrary to the privileges which the Irish parliament, in its former resolution, declares its determination to maintain. It appeared, that ministers themselves had not thought anything of the kind now represented as necessary to be done. When an unforeseen case did occur in a cause in the Court of King’s Bench, for which provision was made, and the bill brought in for the purpose showed the understanding on the subject, for it was a bill to settle such points as have

arisen, or may arise, to points of legislation and judicature, why did not the right hon. gentleman say then, that he thought so much necessary to complete what was done in 1782? In 1785, when the commercial propositions were brought forward, nothing was represented as necessary but commercial regulations. When told that the fourth proposition did affect the independence of Ireland, he denied that such was its nature, and even added, that if it could be liable to such a construction, he rather would abandon the plan and its advantages than raise a doubt upon that subject. Now, however, he had discovered a necessity for something more, which for sixteen years he had overlooked, though repeated occasions had occurred to draw forth his opinions. He found now, indeed, that Ireland was in his power, and the time favourable for his scheme. Notwithstanding the fine words of the right hon. gentleman, the time chosen for the attempt justified the comparison which had been made to the proceedings of France. The right hon. gentleman, indeed, had found out, that those who opposed him laboured under a charge which had never before been deemed serious. Those who differed from him were disreputable for the mere circumstance of being out of office. It seems they ought to throw a veil over every part of life but that which had been spent in office. The right hon. gentleman, and his friends about him, would no doubt approach their latter end with complacency in the recollection of a well-spent life, in which there were so few blots and stains of opposition; but they ought to be content to enjoy this happiness without reproaching others with their misfortune in being excluded from the satisfaction of an official career. The right hon. gentleman was offended with the comparison to the conduct of France with regard to Switzerland; but in the odium of that comparison, he begged leave to share with his hon. friend, for in principle the conduct of the right hon. gentleman was the same as the most jacobinical proceedings of the directory. He was not awed by the sounding eloquence of the right hon. gentleman, as he had so often found, that in proportion as his argument was weak, he endeavoured to cover its defects by lofty words. What was the case? Were a French declaimer, with an hundredth part of the right hon. gentleman's powers, to review the history of Ireland, might he not plausibly represent, that after two hundred years' oppression, the independence of Ireland is at last re

cognised in 1782? that under the advice of British ministers its affairs has been so conducted, that in sixteen years it was left in such a condition as to be unable, as was represented, to protect itself either against foreign force or domestic disaffection; the minister then sends 40,000 troops to her aid, which she receives with gratitude, till at last Ireland is told that she must incorporate with Great Britain! Would not this be represented as a fraud to abuse the weakness of Ireland for the destruction of her independence? It was said, indeed, that no force was to be used; that her free consent would be required. This country, however, was to claim the privilege of judging when Ireland was free to judge for herself; she was to be considered as mad and intoxicated till she acceded to the proposition which we thought it necessary for her interests. In principle, this was the same as the conduct of France so much reprobated. It was nothing to say that it was for the good of Ireland, if that good was thrust upon her by compulsion—intimidation of every kind was used to effect the object. Every placeman who dared to vote according to his own judgment was deprived of his place, and degraded still farther, as the right hon. gentleman represented, by being turned out of office. When such motives were addressed to men's minds, to induce them to submit to the views of the minister, it was a mockery to say that no corruption and intimidation were used. An hon. gentlemen took offence at the supposition of a mercenary support; but without ascribing motives to the conduct of members of parliament, it so happened that many of those who joined the minister for the support of the war, had got their job, their place, or pension. He did not say that these were the motives, they might be the consequences of a conduct; but it might have been better if many gentlemen had not given such suspicion of their sincerity when they spoke so much of the magnitude of the crisis, and the disinterestedness of their support of the minister. The case of Mr. Burke losing his election for Bristol, in consequence of voting for allowing certain commercial advantages to Ireland, was represented by an hon. gentleman (Mr. Ryder) as a proof of the liberality of the parliament of this country, because the advantages in question were granted by a British parliament; but when the circumstances of the times, and the conduct of the volunteers of Ireland were considered, perhaps there would not be so much reason to

extol the generosity of the country on that occasion. In reply to what was said of the mischievous consequences of retracting the pledge given to the catholics in Ireland, allusion had been made to the confessions of the conspirators in that country, and of a person in particular, described as his (Mr. Sheridan's) friend, and a reference to the testimonies at Maidstone. This was a subject, the discussion of which he was desirous rather to take up than avoid. He had seen many attempts made out of doors at least to implicate those who gave evidence at Maidstone in the guilt of Mr. O'Connor. Had those who are supposed to influence the ministerial press of this country been distinguished by the least candour, they would have drawn a quite different inference from that occurrence from that which they had laboured to enforce. It was evident from the very paper, a connection with which was the guilt imputed to Mr. O'Connor at Maidstone, that the persons who gave evidence to his character were those least likely to favour the designs of France, and who had the least to expect had their projects succeeded. It proved that there was one spirit and one feeling in the country, to resist the attempts of the enemy. Such was the comment which that event naturally suggested; but a quite different construction had been studiously given to it. He should confine himself to the evidence he himself had given on O'Connor's trial. He did not retract that evidence, and he called upon a learned gentleman who had been present at the trial, to point out any inconsistency in his conduct. He knew that Mr. O'Connor always spoke in strong terms of any interference of foreign force in the affairs of England, and his mind seemed so much impressed with the superior grievances of Ireland, that he would not admit that, on the comparison, England had any cause whatever to complain. He might have differed from Mr. O'Connor respecting the remedy that was to be applied to the situation of Ireland; but upon that point he was not called upon to say anything. The learned gentlemen, the attorney and solicitor-general, both as lawyers and as gentlemen, had forborne to put to him any question respecting that point, because it had nothing to do with the particular charge at Maidstone, and because they were not disposed to perplex him by any irrelevant question. Mr. O'Connor never had made him his confidant. He knew too well his opinion respecting foreign interference, to give any reason to suppose that it was a thing which he (Mr.

O'Connor) could encourage. With respect to the provocation of Ireland to pursue any particular mode of resistance, he should say nothing; it was enough to say, that he never could permit Ireland to be seized on as a post from which this country could be attacked. He might pity the hardships of Ireland, but, as an Englishman, he could never suffer the enemy to obtain such a favourable point from which to direct their attack against our existence as a nation. Such was his answer to the insinuations thrown out, and which, from the manner and tone, he had reason to suppose, were in a particular manner levelled against himself. To return to the subject then—to the fatal policy which dictated the recall of Earl Fitzwilliam, was to be attributed the calamities by which Ireland had been distracted. It was a matter of no light importance. Those who advised that fatal step were responsible for its consequences. The retraction of that concession which Earl Fitzwilliam was authorised to support, had prepared the catholics for the share they had taken in the late disturbances. Ministers had been challenged by the noble earl to deny that the point was arranged, and that he went over with conciliation to the catholics as a leading object of his policy. But it was said, that the emancipation of the catholics was not the object of the conspiracy; but could it be denied that the discontents of the catholics was the instrument by which the conspirators promoted their own purposes? the conspirators had shown that they feared concession as likely to frustrate their hopes, and rejoiced in the irritation which the disappointment had produced. They were apprehensive of the return of Earl Fitzwilliam, as calculated to give that satisfaction to the catholics as would disappoint their views. He concluded with urging the danger of continuing the agitation of the question at the present moment.

The house divided—for the speaker leaving the chair 131; against it 19.

FEBRUARY 28.

UNION BETWEEN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN.

The order of the day for the house to go into a committee upon his Majesty's message respecting the Union with Ireland, was read.

MR. SHERIDAN said, sir, I certainly do not rise for the purpose of detaining the house any length of time, but I cannot agree with the hon. baronet that there was an understanding on

the part of gentlemen on this side of the house, that they were not at full liberty to oppose your leaving the chair. There was, indeed, an exhortation from the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) opposite, not to give that opposition, but I should not have suspected the hon. baronet of being very desirous to obey that exhortation. The manner, too, in which the right hon. gentleman put that point, conveyed a sort of whimsical compliment. He stated, that many gentlemen had not yet spoken who might be desirous of delivering their sentiments, but he strictly charged his friends and supporters not to reply to anything they might urge. Why should they not reply? It is but an ill compliment to them to suppose they could not say anything deserving a reply, nor is it much better to his own friends. I suppose, however, the right hon. gentleman will adhere to his own compact; and though he has thus muzzled his majority, yet I shall not be surprised if some of them should exert an independent spirit of loquacity in the teeth of his restraint. But, sir, I merely rise to say a single word to two points which have been subject to discussion in the course of the measure before us. I do it before the house goes into the committee, otherwise I shall have no opportunity, for the moment you leave the chair I shall leave the house, and leave the gentlemen to adjust the details of the measure just as they please and judge proper. The first point, sir, is this—It has been asserted that, during the whole course of debate upon this subject, no one member has asserted that union, abstractedly considered, may not be good for Ireland, if it could at any future period be carried with mutual harmony and good intent. Sir, I rise most decidedly to contradict that, and to state it as my opinion, though now the attempt would be attended with multiplied dangers; yet, at no time, it would be a desirable measure: that it must endanger the separation of the kingdoms, and not increase the happiness of either, and in the end must be attended with dangers to the constitutional liberties of both. The other point, sir, upon which I wish to explain my sentiments is this—an hon. gentleman has assumed that no one has ventured directly to assert in this house, that parliament was not competent to give sanction to a legislative union. Sir, I have hitherto most cautiously avoided going into that topic, but at the same time I have formed the most decided opinion upon it. Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary, I main-

tain that there is a broad and visible distinction in the cases of the two parliaments; the one incorporating, and the other surrendering its independence. I have no hesitation in saying, that I think parliament is not competent to surrender an independent legislature; and I now publicly avow my opinion, or hereafter it may be urged as a thing universally admitted, when the question may be the surrender of some of our own dearest and most valuable privileges. It may be brought as an argument hereafter, when such admissions may be of dangerous tendency. I, therefore, now, do not hesitate to say, that the parliament of Ireland have not and cannot have the right to surrender their independence. They cannot do it consistent with their duty to their constituents. It is not reconcilable to the trust upon which they hold their places. With respect to the precedent of Scotland, which has been urged as conclusive, it has a most distinguishing feature; they were summoned for the purpose expressly of considering and debating the specific question of union. I, however, will not give my assent to add a second bad precedent, because there is one already existing. But, sir, the question may be put in a stronger way, in which it will come more home to the bosoms and feelings of Englishmen. Suppose the question was, that we should be called upon to surrender our independence, and be united to another kingdom. What would be our feelings in that case? Suppose George, Prince of Denmark, had succeeded to that kingdom, or that Philip had succeeded to the crown of Spain during his connection with Mary—if at either of these times it had been a question at Madrid, or Copenhagen, to unite this kingdom with either of them, what would the people of this country have said? Unquestionably they would, without hesitation, have told their parliament that they had no right to surrender them and their independence. Sir, I shall add no more, but I thought it proper to say thus much, that my opinions might not be mistaken. One word more, sir, and I have done; I think all civil incapacitations on account of religious distinctions ought to be done away, and on some future day I shall submit that proposition to the house.

MAY 21.

COLD-BATH FIELDS PRISON.—COLONEL DESPARD.

Sir Francis Burdett moved, "That the report on the state of the Cold-bath-fields prison be re-committed." Mr. Sheridan seconded the motion.—Mr. Wilberforce Bird, Sir William Young, Mr. Buxton, and Colonel Elford followed.

MR. SHERIDAN observed, that the hon. gentleman who spoke second in the debate, in the early part of his speech said, "if the house would look at the report, it would be seen immediately, that the resolutions it contained were so founded upon evidence, that it ought to be adopted in every one of the resolutions;" before he sat down he gave up the detail in that respect, and alleged what could not be admitted, that there were others more able than himself to execute the task. He had listened, he said, with great attention to three hon. gentlemen, all of whom were of the committee, whose report was now before the house; but he was bound to say, that what they advanced, instead of supporting the report, and satisfying the house that it ought to be adopted, they satisfied him that the report ought to be rejected by the house, and that a farther inquiry ought to be entered into.

It was a little awkward, he said, for those who complained of him for not always attending the house upon the discussion of public business, to conduct themselves as they did towards him. If it was a fault in him for being absent in general, some persons might think it was an amendment in him to attend; but nothing would satisfy these gentlemen with regard to him; they blamed him for absenting himself, and took care never to bid him welcome when he came. The hon. gentleman had said of him (Mr. Sheridan) that he came at no important period, or on a point of moment, to support his friend. He considered the question extremely important and highly interesting to the people of this country; and whenever he saw public principle abandoned, or humanity outraged, and especially when he saw iniquity protected by the names and authority of members of that house, and the house itself called upon to give its sanction to such conduct, he should think the state of things critical; and, whether he neglected his duty in some other particulars or not, he should not neglect it upon this, but would come forward, and he was proud to say, he would support his hon. and worthy friend, whose motion was now before the house.

The hon. gentleman went very little into the report, although he complained of the hon. baronet for passing it by; there was more excuse for the one than there was for the other. The hon. baronet wanted the report to be re-committed, taking it to be defective, and, therefore, passed it by without much notice; but the hon. gentleman who censured him for so doing, and who relied so much upon the report, had no such excuse. The one desired the house to enter into another inquiry, and, therefore, was not elaborate upon what was before the house; the other relied upon what was before the house, called upon them to adopt it, and yet took but little notice of it. Now he would assert, that, if the whole evidence was perfectly satisfactory to him that the house could not agree to the resolutions of the committee; but, first, he would say a word or two on the general principles of evidence stated by an hon. baronet who had spoken in this debate. He stated, not only from his own authority, which was of great weight, but from the authority of the philosophers of ancient and modern times, of Locke and other authors of justly-esteemed character, and also from Lord Chief Baron Gilbert, whose work he quoted, that in no case was a man to be examined as a witness here when he had signed his name to a petition—no, not so much as a turnpike committee would allow him to be examined in the case wherein he was a petitioner. By this rule of evidence a man was to be told, if he had petitioned against any cruelty, he could not possibly be examined as a witness; that the only regular course of examination that could possibly take place was that of asking those whom he accused of the cruelty, whether there was any truth in the allegation or not. This was the rule of philosophy by which we were to be guided. If Colonel Despard had stated in his petition that he had lost the use of any of his limbs, was deprived of his arm, or that his hand was taken off, the house, by this rule of evidence, was to say “O no; we will not hear Colonel Despard himself, for he is a petitioner—we must follow the rule of the turnpike committee—we will examine the surgeon and other persons who were concerned in the taking off his hand; the man himself is an incompetent witness; he must lie under some mistake.” What was the result of this doctrine? Why, truly, this—if the whole of the body of those who were confined in this Bastile, as it was called by some, not that he knew that to be an

appropriate appellation to it, although appellations were not always, perhaps not very often, given without reason; if these prisoners should be thus treated, and they should happen to have presented a petition upon the state of their case, they must not be heard to substantiate their complaint; there would be an end of any prisoner's exhibiting a complaint, or, if he did not exhibit, he could never support his complaint. This was a thing too monstrous to be maintained for a single moment; and the hon. baronet had confounded two things that were essentially distinct; they were, criminal complaint, and the pursuit of a civil benefit. In the pursuit of a civil advantage, the rule was not to hear any man in evidence in support of his own allegations, but it never had yet been heard of as a rule of law adopted any where, as justice or equity, or common sense, that a man's own evidence should not be taken whenever he preferred a criminal complaint against another. Upon the subject of the new crimes that have made their appearance of late, the worthy baronet had used a great deal of declamation. He had said much in favour of the present constitution, and that it was owing to the present times that many novel remedies must be provided; the case, he said, must be so, because the evils were new.

Now he desired gentlemen who were fond of this doctrine, to take the whole of the ground, and not endeavour to torture the rules of law for particular purposes under the pretence of treason. Let them avow the whole of the ground, and confess at once the times were such, that the ordinary rules of law would not do for them, and that new rules must be adopted. Let them, however, be aware of the effect of such a doctrine; it leads directly, and would lead inevitably, to torture, and the train of horrors that accompanied such cruelties. We had been made acquainted, in some degree, with the fruits of such a system, by what had taken place in the sister kingdom, and he thought we had seen enough upon that subject. He had heard it said, that the noble duke (Portland), whose name appeared at the head of these proceedings, and who committed persons on suspicion of high treason, was too humane to assent to many of the cruelties of which some of the prisoners complained: he believed that of the noble duke; but, although the Duke of Portland was unacquainted with many of these cruelties, he did not believe all his

Majesty's ministers to be so. He might not know that when a man was examined, and committed for farther examination, he might be kept twelve hours without food or anything to comfort him, and that also, for twenty-four hours after commitment to this prison, he has no food or anything to comfort him; that there was an instance of one person who was convicted and executed, being forty-eight hours without any food. All this might be said to be just, if men were guilty of the high crime of treason; but it was felt by those who were suspected, as well as by those who were guilty. Persons thus fasting and famishing for forty-eight hours, might, perhaps, have their spirits broken; and, although they might have been surly at first, they might at last give some information to government which might be supposed to be useful for the public welfare. This was the very thing he complained of; for if the practice was recognized, and a place like this kept up, there never would be wanting ministers who would have an apology for using this power; the plea would always be that it was for the general good that such things should be allowed. He thought so much otherwise, that he believed it would have been better for society, if no such plan as that of Mr. Howard's had ever been heard of; not that he thought that Mr. Howard ever intended, on the contrary, it was evident he did no such thing as intend, the use that was made of his plan, and he would have shuddered with horror, had he known that any such use was made of it. This was evident from his letter of resignation to the king.

With regard to the opinion which the court of King's Bench was supposed to have given on this prison being a proper one for persons accused of treason; he had all the respect for that court that was due to it, but he must beg leave to say that the commons was not bound to adopt the opinion of judges any more than of jailors, upon the question before the house; they had it in their power to go into a grand committee upon courts of justice altogether, and had powers as well as duties to exercise in that particular; and, therefore, upon such a case the authority of a judge would go but a little way with him.

With regard to what had been said upon the dryness of the cells, and the wholesomeness of them, he had to observe, that those who choose to have light in rainy weather, must be wet in these cells, for there was no such thing as having light and

dryness. The choice was—dryness and darkness, or light and wet. He had heard hon. gentlemen say a good deal upon the comforts of this place. Some gentlemen weighed the bread ; others had tasted the meat ; everything, according to them, was very comfortable in this prison. He wished some of the members of the house had tasted a night's lodging there.

He then proceeded to take notice of the condition of all other prisoners in comparison with that of those who are charged with high treason, or rather with the suspicion of it. If a person was charged with any crime, even murder, he had his accuser brought before him, and, if not convicted, he had his day of relief ; but here there was no day of relief, and it was enough to be committed on suspicion only. He declined entering into the question of the suspension of the habeas corpus act, but now that it was suspended he thought it behoved the house to be more than usually jealous of the power of ministers, to see that they did not abuse the great power that was put into their hands, to check which, nothing was so seasonable or proper as inquiry.

Here Mr. Sheridan took notice of the case of the persons of Manchester, who had been charged, and against whom there was not, he said, the least foundation of any crime ; they had, however, it appeared, been kept three days in the week to be fed on bread and water. He asked, whether this was not most intolerable in a country calling itself free ? and all these accusations made, God only knew by whom, not upon oath, nor under any sanction, except the will of ministers.

He could not agree to the resolutions, because, even upon the face of the report, there was evidence that neither the jailor, the magistrates, nor the committee had done their duty. He hoped, however, the house would. It was admitted that the printed regulations had been hung up, and the journal was not regularly kept. Here then, by the omission of the first, the only regulation which could ensure justice or redress to the prisoners, was taken away. Such was the vigilance of the magistrates, that this regulation, so long neglected, they never once thought it necessary to enforce ; and if this was not imposition in the governor and negligence in the magistrates, he knew not to what conduct these descriptions would apply. The keeping of the journal was wholly neglected. The clerk examined on this point

said, "that material occurrences only were inserted in it;" and it nevertheless appeared, that during the three months in which had taken place the visits of Sir Francis Burdett, the conspiracy to murder the governor, the telegraphic communications, and all the enormities complained of, none of these were deemed material occurrences to be inserted in this journal, or log-book. Was it possible then to assent to a resolution which declared the attention of the magistrates to be exemplary? As to the declaration of the grand jury, it was ridiculous to consider it as decisive. Their visits took place always at stated times, and then no doubt care would be taken to have the bread weight, the meat of the best, and the cells in good order, while all those we could complain would be kept out of the way, and thus the grand jury might pass through these charnel-houses of misery without perceiving the corruption and the wretchedness they contained. Such evidence as this would not satisfy his mind that all was well. It was in evidence that Aris had borrowed money from prisoners. The gross impropriety of this was reprobated in the strongest terms by an hon. baronet (Sir William Young), and the oppressions to which it might lead strongly represented: yet why did not the committee itself bear witness to this crying abuse? Why was it left for individual members tardily to express even their particular sentiments only on the renewal of this discussion? A practice of so dangerous a nature ought to have been stigmatised by the committee, and the omission he could not but consider as a culpable negligence. What horror must be entertained of that power of injustice and oppression, when men were compelled to offer their money to appease its fury? Forced loans had commonly been understood to mean what was taken from the lender against his consent; but here, to shield them from oppression, the lender was compelled to force the borrower to receive the loan. After this instance of tyranny, even upon the mode of inquiry prosecuted by the committee; after this suspicion, nay, this damning proof of mismanagement and corruption, was he not warranted in saying that the committee, in everlooking, or failing to follow it out, had not done their duty? As to the first resolution—"That the situation of the prison was airy and dry," he had no objection to agree to it, and would likewise agree to testify that it stood in the parish of Clerkenwell, but he was not prepared to say that it fully an-

swered the purpose of its establishment. Mr. Howard's authority had been quoted to justify its damp narrow cells, and its solitary confinement. But Mr. Howard meant this confinement to be limited only to persons whose lives were forfeited to the laws, whose punishment was commuted. Neither did Mr. Howard recommend that solitary confinement to be extended farther than what tended to reformation, and it was in his plan to have the cells warmed with tubes passing through them. What would he have thought, however, to see persons on suspicion of high treason, probably without information on oath, exposed to a treatment like this, so nearly approaching to torture? It had been remarked that formerly, when numbers of persons had been arrested at Sheffield and elsewhere, the good treatment they experienced had convinced them that the constitution which practised such lenity could not be incurably defective. But what would be the sentiment diffused through the country, when the prisoner wrote to his starving wife and family that he himself was exposed to sufferings still more rigorous than theirs? He had one observation more to make, and it was to submit to the attorney-general a question of great importance. He contended that the warrants under which many persons were arrested were illegal, and that ministers would be obliged to apply for a bill of indemnity. What he wished to ask was, whether the suspension of the habeas-corpus gave a power to ministers to arrest persons whom they would not previously have been entitled to arrest? Without information on oath, were they entitled to send men to prison, or were they merely authorised to postpone the trials of men whom it would be dangerous, or inconvenient, to bring to trial within the ordinary time prescribed by law? If a bill of indemnity should be required, it would be a strong argument against it, should ministers have abused the power so obtained, by exercising upon persons detained a rigour beyond the necessity of the case, and foreign from the genius and spirit of the laws of England. Upon the whole, he thought that his hon. friend had brought forward charges which deserved inquiry, and the defects on the face of the report justified its recommitment.

Towards the close of the debate Mr. Sheridan rose again.

Mr. Sheridan hoped the house would permit him to offer a few words in explanation of the question which he had put to

the learned gentleman (the attorney-general), as the learned gentleman had most undoubtedly misunderstood him; for he ascribed to him a very improper question, in supposing that he meant to ask whether persons who should have been thus imprisoned on suspicion of treason, and thus cruelly treated during their imprisonment, might not afterwards be entitled to bring an action against his Majesty's secretary of state? Such a question, indeed, would have been improper and idle in the extreme; for how could it be supposed that a miserable wretch, who was, both himself and his family, totally ruined, and who had not a shilling remaining in the world, could be able to institute such an action? He never, surely, could have dreamt of putting such a question. What he asked was, "whether, during the suspension of the habeas corpus act, and when that suspension had armed ministers with farther powers for committing persons to prison than they possessed before, they ought not to be responsible and amenable for any superfluous and unnecessary hardships which such powers might enable them to inflict upon persons, who might be detained in prison, in consequence of the suspension of the habeas-corpus?" This question he had followed up with arguments and illustrations to support its propriety, and remarked how seriously it behoved ministers to look to that; if they had been armed with any extraordinary powers, for the security of the constitution and the country, no one exertion of it should lead them to any act of unnecessary rigour in carrying into execution the measures for which such powers had been intrusted to their hands.

The house divided—for the motion 6; against it 47.

FEBRUARY 10, 1800.

HELDER EXPEDITION.

MR. SHERIDAN rose for the purpose of moving for an inquiry into the causes of the failure of the expedition against Holland; and delivered himself as follows:—

Sir, upon the extraordinary meeting of parliament on the 24th of September last, an opportunity occurred of discussing the propriety of reducing the militia force of the country, by the introduction of a bill to carry that measure farther than had been done by the act of the preceding session. The avowed

purpose of that bill was, to enable ministers to prosecute the expedition against Holland. Unfortunately, I then differed from some of those gentlemen with whom I always feel it painful to disagree upon political questions. I did not think that, in the peculiar circumstances in which we then were placed, it was proper to oppose the measure. I will repeat the reason which then dictated my conduct. I then disapproved, as much as I had ever done, that bill, as a dangerous violation of our great constitutional defence, the militia system. When it was proposed, however, to renew and extend the act, there were inducements to a reluctant acquiescence in its renewal, which did not exist upon its first adoption. The law had passed, and ministers had availed themselves of its provisions, to assemble that army which was engaged in the Dutch expedition. We had received accounts of the battle of the 19th of September at Bergen. Our troops were in a critical situation; and, seeing no other means by which reinforcements could be procured, I was unwilling that anything should be done that could lead our gallant army to think, for a moment, that they were abandoned by a British parliament.

On that occasion likewise I assumed, that ministers, in prosecuting the attempt which they had begun, acted on the most authentic information of the favourable dispositions of the Dutch people. I stated, that the executive government, in relying upon their knowledge, and proceeding upon their intelligence, incurred a great responsibility. Having done so then, I should conceive that I shrunk from a sort of pledge that I had given, did I not now endeavour to make ministers answer for the confidence which they had obtained, and for the course which they had pursued. I was, indeed, inclined to entertain no very sanguine hopes of ultimate success in the enterprise, after the experience we had of its commencement. My apprehensions were removed in some measure, when I heard it stated by a right hon. gentleman opposite to me, that we had the most unquestionable information of the attachment of the Dutch to the cause we supported. I was again damped in these agreeable expectations, when I found that the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) shrunk from any declaration that ministers proceeded on such sure ground, when he said, that we were justified in the prosecution of the plan, by a knowledge, not of the actual

state and disposition of the Dutch people, but by a knowledge of human nature—a knowledge now recorded in characters of blood and woe upon the coasts of Holland. When I heard this alleged as sufficient foundation for our experiment, I again despaired of a favourable result.

As to the inquiry which I shall have the honour to propose, few arguments, I should think, will be necessary to prove that it ought to be adopted. When the news arrived of the total failure of the expedition, a failure so disastrous, so disgraceful, so humiliating to those by whom it was planned, while no blame can attach to the conduct of the gallant officers and men, whose efforts were thus rendered unprofitable, the universal cry was, that an inquiry should be instituted by the house into the causes by which so ignominious an event was occasioned. Whether the public feeling of indignation has cooled in the interval that has elapsed, or not, I will not take upon me to say. The right hon. gentleman, however, did everything in his power to prevent any motion for inquiry while the disgrace was yet recent, and the feeling of the country warm. With the intelligence in his possession, of what amounted to nothing less than the overthrow of all our hopes of ultimate success, parliament was adjourned; every attempt to investigate was rendered impossible; and the resentment and mortification of the public were left to sink away of themselves, or to be diverted by fresh occurrences.

I profess, sir, that in bringing this subject before the house, I do not consider it as a party question. It is one that can admit of no party feeling. It is a question that, in the highest degree, interests every feeling for the glory of the country, every sentiment of humanity for the loss our troops have sustained, for the honour which they have to support. As members of this house, we are called upon by the sacred duty we owe to our constituents, to investigate a transaction, which, on the face of it, presents so much argument for inquiry; and which, in its consequences, has been attended with such a waste of blood and expense of treasure. In treating of this question, I shall not proceed upon such private information as every gentleman in this house may have had an opportunity to obtain. I shall found my arguments and conclusions upon the recorded accounts of ministers themselves in their own gazettes, upon the information furnished by them in their proclamations and treaties. I shall not

consider the advantages of having obtained possession of the Dutch fleet. That acquisition I view, perhaps, as less important than others do, and I shall take an opportunity of saying a few words respecting it. Excepting the Dutch fleet, then, what have we obtained to compensate for the loss of men, for the profusion of money, for the discredit we have incurred? I should be extremely glad to know what arguments will be employed to dissuade the house from agreeing to an inquiry. I hope we shall to-night hear it urged against examining into the causes of an expedition so wasteful in its attempt, so ignominious in its failure, that it might reveal what is not proper to be known, that it will interrupt the service, or produce those inconveniences which it has been usual to object to such a motion for inquiry. Arguments like these, I have heard combatted by the right hon. gentleman during the American war, and I hope he will not rely upon them now. Indeed, they have not in this case the plausibility they may have had in others. By investigating the causes of the failure of the expedition to Holland, what is there to reveal that can be prejudicial to us in future? What interruption can it give to any part of the public service? I certainly cannot suppose that it will be contended that there has been no failure. I cannot conceive that the corrupt and clandestine surrender of the Dutch fleet will be viewed as the attainment of all our wishes, and the success of all our vices. Yet I see, that in the speech of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on opening the parliament of that country, something like this is advanced. The Marquis Cornwallis tells the Irish parliament, that the expedition to Holland has been attended with such mighty advantages, that it will prevent the invasion of Ireland, and so forth, and merely speaks of it as having not quite succeeded. He speaks as if the main object of our policy, and of our efforts, was not the deliverance of the Dutch from the yoke of France; not the restoration of the house of Orange to their rights; not the protection of religion, the defence of social order; but the capture of a few Dutch ships of war had been the object of such expensive preparation and extraordinary efforts, as if for such an acquisition we have subsidized the mercenary magnanimity of Russia, and for this called into action our military strength, and strained our financial resources. What other advantage than this, I ask, have we obtained from this famed secret expedition? Secret, indeed, it

was called, till the term became absolutely ridiculous. Never, indeed, was an undertaking conducted with such ostentatious mystery—never did the object of a secret expedition obtain such universal notoriety. The only thing secret in the expedition was the favourable disposition of the Dutch people to our cause ; a secret so well kept to be sure, that to this hour it has never been discovered.

But I see by the gestures of the right hon. gentlemen opposite, that they are of opinion that the Dutch fleet is not the only thing we have gained. It may be so, to be sure, in a certain way. It was an expedition of discovery, and not altogether unsuccessful in that view. We have made three notable discoveries :—we have, in the first place, discovered that there is no reliance to be placed in the chancellor of the exchequer's knowledge of human nature ; we have discovered that Holland is a country intersected by dykes, ditches, and canals ; and we have discovered that the weather there too, is not so good in October as it is in June ! The instruction which we have thus obtained, is doubtless very valuable : it is a good thing to learn to distrust the knowledge of ministers in human nature ; the topography and climate of a country were good things also to be acquainted with. This information, however, may be purchased too dear : if we consider the number of lives which have been lost ; if we reflect that the tenth of every man's income has been squandered, that so much of our best blood has been shed in vain, and all by the misconduct of ministers, we shall have little reason to boast that our discoveries have been easily made, and our acquisitions cheaply purchased.

I have already alluded to the capture of the Dutch fleet.—I must speak out fairly what I think. I do not prize this acquisition at a very high rate. When we are told that it has prevented the invasion of Ireland, we are to consider on what terms this capture was made : we took possession of the Dutch ships in the name of the stadtholder ; are they to be manned with the mutinous crews who surrendered them, and employed in the name of the stadtholder ? if so, they are no addition to our navy. But it is said, if not an addition to our maritime strength, they at least are a deduction from that of the enemy. Yet, if they were to be manned by those sailors who gave them up to England, they could never have been formidable to us as ene-

mies. This boasted acquisition, then, in every view, appears to be of very little importance. When I reflect, however, upon the mode in which this acquisition was gained, I not only think it of little value, but consider it as of the most perilous example; I could wish we had won it in some other way, or not at all. I do not regret that it was not obtained at the expense of bloodshed, yet I tremble to see a deliberating navy in the face of the naval force for England; I dread to behold the example of seamen deciding upon the cause of their country, instead of fighting its battles. I do not like to see mutiny recommended to our sailors by any example or any approbation. I hope there is nothing in the temper of our navy to catch the infection: I like to see the spirit of Blake prevail, who told his sailors, "that it was their duty to fight for their country, in whatever hands the government might be:" this is sound reason; these are the safest maxims. It is not wise or politic to encourage any other. When we consider how the fleet was surrendered, I doubt much whether the conduct of the sailors afford any proof of the disposition of the people. We know, by fatal experience, that artifices may be successfully employed to delude even our own navy into a conduct which the nation universally disapproves. What were the means employed to produce that temper in the Dutch navy, to which we owe the capture of the fleet? Were they such as can be avowed and justified? If ministers encouraged and promoted a spirit of mutiny among the Dutch sailors, they ill understood the interests of their own country: they have departed from a great principle to serve a particular purpose. To gain a partial advantage, they have introduced a most dangerous precedent. Suppose that Admiral Story had resisted the spirit of mutiny and disobedience; suppose he had done what De Ruyter would have done in his situation, endeavoured to maintain his authority and perished in the attempt, would you have permitted your seamen to welcome the Dutch sailors, besmeared with the blood of their admiral and officers? Would you have sanctioned such a deed? Would you have applauded the doers? Would you have allowed your seamen to become their allies and associates? Yet were it only the want of vigour in the officers to prevent this catastrophe, the example is the same; and we all know how dangerous such a violation is to the principle of discipline. It is not easy to

guard against the contagion : when speaking of the character of our navy, and the necessity of preserving it, I cannot help saying a word or two of practices that have long been permitted to disgrace its character, and corrupt its spirit. Every body must have heard of the system of sending United Irishmen on board the fleet : culprits and vagabonds of every description, worthless wretches of every kind are thought good enough for his Majesty's service, and people speak of putting them on board ship as the fittest place in the world for their reception. Is it possible to conceive a more gross and palpable folly, a more shameful and dangerous abuse? For God's sake dispose of such people anywhere but in your navy ; place them in your public offices ; send them to the treasury, the excise, the customs—provide for them in the war-office ; feed them with cheese parings, and candle ends, but do not convert your navy into a receptacle for rogues and traitors. Do not dispose of them in a way that makes them more dangerous than they could be anywhere else. What should you think, for instance, if your ships were to be built in the same way they are manned? What would you think if, when a rotten beam were found in any public office, it were to be said, O ! this won't do for his Majesty's use, send it to the dock-yard? Yet the absurdity would be no greater than that which is practised every day in the manner I have stated. As you build your ships of the soundest wood, you should take no less care to man them with the soundest hearts.

Entertaining these sentiments respecting the importance of preserving the spirit of your navy, I can as little approve the mode in which the Dutch fleet was gained, as I can enter into the views of those who represent the acquisition as of so much importance. Take into consideration the whole of the case ; weigh what you have lost and what you have gained, and you will find that there is a fearful balance against you. The result of the late expedition has thrown discredit on your councils ; it has heaped dishonour on your operations. You cannot again repeat the attempt of restoring the house of Orange ; you have left the pretensions of that family more desperate than ever. The confidence of their enemies is confirmed ; the hopes of their partizans are overthrown. After this review, I confess I cannot conceive how any man can contend, that the result of the expe-

dition has in any degree repaid our sacrifices, or realized our expectations.

As to the object of the expedition, in so far as it aimed at the rescue of Holland from the dominion of France, and the restoration of the house of Orange, I most readily agree, that in as far as it could have been attempted with any hopes of success, and with any regard to the actual circumstances of this country, it was as legitimate a British object as can be imagined. I admit that it was, in principle, as sound policy to oppose the French dominion in Holland in 1799, as it was to prevent its triumph in 1787. In proportion, however, as the object was wise and good, must be the criminality of those to whose misconduct its failure is to be attributed. If, by their gross negligence, their ignorance, and their presumption, we have failed in an undertaking so dear to every British heart, the value of the prize for which we contended only augments the mortification of our disappointment.

That the house of Orange has strong claims upon the gratitude, nay, upon the justice of Great Britain, I am sure I do not deny. They have well deserved that hospitable asylum which they enjoy in this country. They have ever been faithfully attached to its cause. Their expulsion from their hereditary authority in Holland, indeed, is in a great measure to be ascribed to their deference to British councils, perhaps their devotion to the views of British ministers. The restoration of that family to their fortunes and their rank, therefore, was in itself an honourable motive for our interference. I cannot at the same time agree in the opinion, that we had any particular claim to the attachment of the Dutch. I see it assumed in the proclamations addressed to them, that they must be ours in their hearts. I doubt the fact very much, and I am at a loss to discover upon what ministers could have formed this supposition. I cannot but wonder how it was imagined that our attempt was agreeable to the general will of the people in Holland. When the prospect of restoring the house of Bourbon in France was under consideration in this house, the right hon. gentleman assured us, that such an attempt could not be successful without the general consent of the people; nay, that it ought not to succeed. Why then did he not apply the same reasoning to the case of Holland? Why do ministers in the note, in answer to the proposals

from the French government, say, that his Majesty does not claim to prescribe a government for France, if they do not admit the weight of the maxim? They surely do not admit the principle in the case of France, because she is strong, and deny it Holland because she is weak? What then had we to expect from the concurrence of the Dutch? What influence ought their character and dispositions to have had upon the plan and conduct of the expedition?

It must be familiar to every gentleman who is acquainted with the relative connection of this country with Holland, that it is long since any cordiality prevailed between the two countries. The French faction had been increasing, and possessed a very powerful interest in the United Provinces. In this situation, grounds of dispute have arisen at no very remote period. In the American war, the Dutch complained bitterly of our aggressions. In answer to their complaints, the Dutch were represented in speeches and proclamations as a dull and stupid people. A noble lord, then in administration, used the extraordinary expression, that the Dutch must “be stunned into their senses.” By such treatment the influence of France was increased in Holland. Perhaps, too, it is but fair to acknowledge, that the Dutch, in the mere view of promoting their own interests, might conceive the connection with France more beneficial to them than that with England. This led to the attempts which were made in 1787 to draw more close the connection with France. That design was prevented by the interference of this country, and by the efforts of a Prussian army. But, was this triumph used in such a way as to conciliate the Dutch? At the breaking out of the present war, the Dutch, against their own wishes, nay, against the remonstrances of many sincere friends of the house of Orange, were compelled to abandon their neutrality and to take a share in the war. They were engaged in the contest by our influence, but we were not able to protect them in the moment of difficulty. From being our allies they became our enemies. But, previous to this change, what were the symptoms of cordiality and good understanding when we were endeavouring to defend Holland? Did not our troops leave that country, complaining of the people, irritated by their reproaches? After the success of the French invasion, was our conduct calculated to increase the number of our friends, and to diminish the

number of our enemies? Was it right, after the stadtholder had taken refuge in this country, to consider him as sovereign of Holland, which he never was, to require his consent to the seizure of so much Dutch property? Were such measures conciliatory? Did they tend to promote the interest of the stadtholder? In the negotiation for peace at Lisle, what was the conduct of ministers? The negotiation was broken off, because the French refused to allow us to retain, as indemnification for their aggrandizement, the conquests we had made at the expense of the Dutch, who had been involved in the quarrel by our obstinacy and violence. What were the Dutch to think of this proceeding? Smarting under the losses they had sustained, must they not have considered us as gross hypocrites when lately we affected such a zeal for their interests, which, in the instances alluded to, we had rendered so much subservient to our own? If formerly they saw us willing to compensate the conquests of France by retaining all their colonial possessions, could they believe us more disinterested, after having subsidized the forces of Russia, and increased our claims to indemnification by so much additional expenditure?

These are circumstances which could not fail to produce a powerful impression upon the cool and calculating Dutchman. On entering upon the expedition for the deliverance of Holland, what means did we employ to efface the prejudice that must have existed against our disinterestedness. Look at the proclamations which were issued on our landing in Holland. Read that distributed by Sir Ralph Abercrombie: it holds out to the Dutch, to be sure, delightful visions of future happiness under their ancient government; but it says not a word of the Cape of Good Hope, of Ceylon, of Trincomalee. The gallant officer by whom it was issued I acquit of any share in the composition. He is not answerable for its policy. But what is its spirit? We address the Dutch, a people cold, considerate, phlegmatic, as if they were a nation of religious fanatics or chivalrous warriors. Religion is dragged in upon all occasions; but why it is so I cannot understand. The French did not interfere with the religion of the Dutch. They do not seem, indeed, to have prevented religious worship in any country where their arms have prevailed; but, least of all, had they any temptation to interfere with the poverty and simplicity of the religious institutions of

the Dutch? What influence, then, could such topics produce in Holland? Everything that could have no effect was urged—everything that might engage them in our favour was omitted. We tell the Dutch to “Forget and forgive the past.” But, now will they understand this advice? Will they not consider it as a recommendation to *forget* that they ever had colonies, and to *forgive* us for taking them? The minister seems to have understood very little of Dutch human nature, if he expected such proclamations to have any success among them. If, instead of all the fine reflections upon religion, social order, and their former government, he had said we will give you back all your colonies, the argument would have been understood, and the effect might have been favourable. Instead of this, what did we tell them in other terms? Be a nation without trade; take back your old government; be a province dependant upon England through the stadtholder. These are the blessings which we promise you, and which you must co-operate with us to obtain.

These considerations I have adduced, to show that ministers had not truly calculated the temper and views of the people of Holland; that they had no reason to flatter themselves with the support of that country; and that they did not pursue the course by which it was to be obtained. It was, to the last degree, arrogant and presumptuous to involve this nation in the expense of such an armament as was employed in the late expedition, upon vain speculations. The right hon. gentleman should not have put his theories of human nature to such a costly experiment. He ought to have done what every wise statesman should do—act only in matters of such high moment and extensive concern, upon authentic information and upon practical grounds.

There is another very material point which I cannot pass unnoticed. After submitting to the sacrifice of so much blood, to such heavy burdens, it is not too much to say that we are entitled to plain dealing; but, if the plan proposed had been attended with success, was it the intention of ministers to establish the old government of Holland? I confess I have doubts on this subject. It may be recollected that a noble and vigorous statesman in another place, the arguing upon an Irish Union, represented the old government of Holland as feeble, inefficient, incompetent to its own defence, and to any useful exertion, from

the want of unity in its executive authority. Was it then for the re-establishment of this piece of imbecility, this form of government incapable of self-defence, incapable of contributing any assistance to its allies, that our blood and treasure was to be applied? or, was it intended to strengthen the government, to give it the vigour of despotism for the purposes of self-defence and useful alliance? If this was their intention, they meant a usurpation; and I trust that the stadtholder would have been an unwilling usurper. Can we conceive that they concealed this design, if it was really entertained; if they did not communicate the intention to the partizans of the house of Orange, they were guilty of a shameful fraud in inviting them to contribute to the restoration of the ancient government, while they were risking their lives and fortunes for a new constitution. If they did communicate their design to improve their former government, by an infusion of additional strength, were they sure that the Dutch would agree to changes which violated those principles and those forms to which they were obstinately attached? After the differences, then, which subsisted between this country and Holland during the American war; after the experience of the campaigns on the continent, in which we were engaged along with them against France; after the known views of domestic parties in Holland; after we had forced Holland into the war, and showed, after all, a desire to indemnify ourselves for the continental conquests, by the possession of her colonies; after the grounds of suspicion which existed against our intentions, both with regard to the commercial relations and the political establishments of Holland; had we any reasons to infer a welcome reception or a cordial co-operation? If their consent made a necessary ingredient in the expedition; had we such assurance of their favourable disposition, as to justify an enterprise, to the success of which it was essential? Ministers had no right to calculate upon the dispositions of the Dutch. They are guilty, therefore, of having squandered the blood and resources of this country upon a plan, undertaken without due examination, and concerted without a proper intention to the circumstances on which its success necessarily depended.

Considering the scheme of this expedition, from its first conception to the period of its execution, we find it in such variation and uncertainty, as to preclude the supposition that it was

embraced and pursued upon any uniform views of policy. The powers of the hereditary Prince of Orange, given in his proclamation to the Dutch, are dated in December, 1798, from which a presumption arises that the plan of the expedition was in agitation at the time of the first treaty with Russia, which was concluded about that period. The declaration of the Emperor Paul, in his "zeal for the cause of sovereigns," points at this attempt for the deliverance of Holland. If it was *then* planned and agreed that Russian troops should be employed, what was the policy of ministers? Though they had themselves admitted that the scheme must be a *coup de main*, and that its success depended upon surprise, the landing in Holland was not effected till the 27th of August, 1799! It appears that expectations had been formed of inducing Prussia to enter into the common cause against France. In June, 1799, however, all hopes of drawing Prussia from her neutrality were abandoned. A treaty is concluded, in which, besides the troops to be employed in other objects, 17,000 Russians are to be employed in the expedition against Holland. The Emperor Paul, too, with that magnanimity which characterises all his transactions with this country, agrees to employ some of his own ships to transport the forces to England, upon condition of his being allowed sufficient indemnification for fitting out the vessels in question for another expedition. This seems to be the first specific arrangement of the plan, and the management of ministers in this is likewise singularly conspicuous! At the time when they expected the co-operation of Prussia, no very precise resolution had been taken respecting the Dutch expedition. The exertions of the King of Prussia were solicited to promote objects which, as the event showed, would be attained without his assistance; that design, however, to which he must have been well inclined, and for the success of which his co-operation was essential, but was faintly, if at all, brought into notice. After his determination to remain neutral, ministers, as if to show their resentment of his policy, then determined to prosecute with the greatest vigour that plan to which, of all others, the concurrence of the Prussian cabinet, and the co-operation of the Prussian forces, were necessary.

The landing at Helder was at length effected. I must do justice to the gallant officers employed in the expedition. No blame whatever attaches to the conduct of the royal commander-

in-chief, or of those who served along with him. The expedition was planned upon such sanguine calculations of co-operation from the inhabitants, that the military efforts were made dependent upon the political views of its authors. The army was sent to Holland as to a friendly country. Its supplies of every kind were arranged upon this presumption. The Duke of York himself, not a member of the cabinet, had no means of verifying the calculations upon which the cabinet ministers had resolved upon the expedition. I am aware, sir, that parliament does not know such a body as the cabinet council. I do not criticise the selection which his Majesty has made of that body, which may be considered as a committee of that which the constitution recognizes, the privy council. Still I cannot help thinking, that at a moment so critical as the present, the commander-in-chief ought to have been a member of the cabinet. The Duke of York was unacquainted with the true state of Holland. His military plans and military conduct must have been accommodated to the political views and political representations of ministers. In saying that the Duke of York was a proper person to advise his Majesty, as a member of the cabinet, upon everything which such an expedition might require, I repeat only what the public voice has declared of his royal highness's honourable, attentive, and meritorious government of the army, since he has possessed the chief command. To his royal highness I impute no blame. He is not responsible for the planning of the enterprize, which, framed as it was, must have influenced so much the military execution. It is on the authors of the scheme that we are to charge the faults of the design and the disgrace of the catastrophe.

The army then went to Holland as a friendly country. A summons was sent by General Abercrombie to the Batavian commander, in a style of haughty menace, which clearly proved that it was not the production of that gallant and respectable officer. The conduct of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, on every occasion, his manly and upright proceedings while in Ireland, prove him to be a man not likely to be the author of a production such as that to which I allude. The answer of the Batavian officer was spirited. What a contrast, indeed, between the presumptuous tone with which we addressed the enemy at the beginning, and the ignominious escape we were at length compelled to stipulate for at the termination of the campaign. Ministers say that they

cannot make peace with the French government ; that the latter never yet observed any armistice that they concluded. In our own instance we know, by experience, that if we cannot make peace with France, we can make a convention we know ; from the testimony of our own officers, that the enemy can observe an armistice. But what was the case when General Abercrombie landed ? Did he find the Batavian troops disposed, like the sailors, to surrender without a blow ? Did he not meet with the most vigorous resistance, even before any Frenchmen appeared in action, and our very first success was purchased by the loss of a great number of our brave countrymen ? How did it happen that, after the landing was effected, no attempt was made to follow up the advantage ? Was General Abercrombie prevented by his orders, or by the want of necessaries, from advancing ? It is a matter of less importance, indeed, but it tends to explain the want of arrangement in the plan, that the army was for some time destitute of the means of moving forward. It has been positively asserted, that the army was left without baggage-waggons ; that they were first cheered with the hope that certain ships in sight contained these waggons, and that afterwards their hopes were damped on being told “ that the waggons were in some ships, but the wheels were in others ? ” Was it true also, that the want of other means of conveying the bleeding troops from the field of battle had obliged them to have recourse to Dutch schuyts ? Surely not one British soldier should have perished through such negligence as this ! Was it true that such ignorance prevailed of the roads of Holland, that the waggons, which were afterwards employed, proved useless ? I say, sir, that no personal consideration ought to shield from inquiry the persons in various situations of contractors, purveyors, &c. to whom these, and similar inconveniences, were owing.

Between the first landing at the Helder, and the arrival of the reinforcements under the Duke of York, an opportunity had been given to ascertain the determined resolution of the Batavian army to resist our attempt. French troops were pouring into Holland. Was it not known, likewise, that the nature of the country afforded the means of defence almost insuperable ? Were not all the circumstances which pointed out the certain conclusion, that the expedition could not be ultimately successful, known previous to the sailing of the Duke of York ? If

there was not a secret motive for persevering in the expedition, which no common understanding can suspect, why did not ministers profit by their experience to avoid farther disaster? If they did not know all these circumstances, they must stand convicted of a negligence no less criminal than the presumption of persisting after so many warnings to desist. On the 10th of September, the French and Batavians, anxious to make an impression on our troops before the arrival of the reinforcements, attacked Sir Ralph Abercrombie, but were repulsed by the gallantry of our troops, and the strength of their position. On the 13th, the Duke of York arrived, and on the 19th, an attack was made upon the enemy, which was successful in that part where the British troops were engaged, and unsuccessful on the part of the Russians. Of the behaviour of the latter I shall say but little. If, however, the accounts of their conduct in the villages where they came be true, it would form the ground not merely of inquiry, but of an address to his Majesty. The result of this action was, that the British and Russian forces retreated to their former position.

Here I must beg the attention of the house to what was passing at home. On the 24th, parliament was to meet; ministers had intelligence of this disastrous engagement; they were apprized of the resistance of the Dutch troops, and of the backwardness of the inhabitants to assist our cause; yet, with all these facts in their possession, they made his Majesty come down to parliament, and express his sanguine hopes of the ultimate success of the expedition! If, then, ministers were aware of the true state of our affairs in Holland, a more gross contempt of truth, or more flagrant deception of parliament, never was practised by any administration.

After the action of the 2nd of October, the army moved forward. This was represented as a great victory; there is every reason to believe, however, that it was a drawn battle. Alkmaer was stated to have opened its gates, as if this had been the act of the inhabitants, and a proof of their friendly disposition. The fact, however, was, that a lieutenant and some troops having accidentally advanced near the place, found that it was without means of defence, of which he immediately gave information, and the town was occupied by our troops. In his dispatches after the action, his Royal Highness states that it had given

him the command of an extent of country, and that the inhabitants would have an opportunity to declare themselves. What was the consequence? The army attempted to advance; an engagement took place on the 6th, in which we claimed the victory. But so little advantageous was the success, that, on the 7th, in the evening, the retreat was ordered; the army returned to its old position at Shagen Brug; and this retreat was conducted so precipitately, that 400 women and children were left behind. These the French treated with great propriety; nay, these cruel and perfidious enemies actually clothed the children, and sent them back with the women to the British head-quarters. Thus, at length, instead of the deliverance of the Dutch, the hopes of which we had so sanguinely indulged, the army was compelled to enter into a capitulation for its escape! What a sad and mortifying termination of a plan in which so much exertion had been employed, and so much of our hope had been embarked! I do not censure those by whom it was concluded. I believe, on the contrary, that it was inevitable in the situation in which the army was placed. Yet, how painful a reflection! to find that the inducement held out to the enemy to agree to the convention, was a threat to destroy for ever the means of trade and commerce of that people whom we had gone to save! I am sure that, had circumstances made it necessary to proceed to so cruel an alternative, it would have been employed with reluctance. It was a humiliating thing, after such proud expectations, to fail in our design, and fail too amidst such an accumulation of disgrace. Our army left Holland with sentiments of indignation against the Batavians, by whom they conceived themselves injured and deceived; with detestation of their allies, to whose misconduct they imputed the disastrous termination of the campaign; and with increased esteem for the enemy whom they had been taught to abhor.

Such is the transaction which the house is called upon to investigate. Never was there a case which, *prima facie*, presented stronger grounds for inquiry. There are moments when it becomes this house to exercise a peculiar jealousy of its reputation: an opinion has gone abroad, that this house has reposed too blind a confidence in ministers: the rewards which have followed this confidence, have thrown more than a suspicion on the purity of the motive. It is necessary, on an occasion like this, to watch

their conduct with more than ordinary attention. The public interest which it has excited, the universal regard which the decision of the house will attract, must render it the object of more than common severity of revision. The suspicion that the minister has nothing to fear from the controlling vigilance of parliament, must either be strongly confirmed, or honourably removed. It is not a consequence which any member need fear from the result of inquiry, that ministers will be obliged to quit their places. It would be no advantage, doubtless, to show that the administration of this country is in the hands of convicted incapacity ; but still it would be a far greater evil to prove that ministers are too powerful for control ; that error is exempted from inquiry, and misconduct secure from censure. The present case should afford a salutary caution to the house, how they gave their confidence to ministers to pursue against France that system of exploded impolicy which has produced such fatal mischief and indelible disgrace. We are at war for the restoration of the Bourbons, and for nothing else. All the qualifications with which this proposition is limited are mere quibbles : this is the *sine qua non* to immediate peace. It was stated in the answer of Lord Grenville, that there was a *possibility* of negotiation with the present government of France ; but if it be true, that what is possible is *quod potest esse*, there was no immediate alternative. We were fighting for the restoration of the house of Bourbon. The question resolves itself into these propositions—the people of France must institute a government which his Majesty's ministers shall approve, and then submit to prove its stability. In the meantime, this stability is to be ascertained by employing every hostile means to work its overthrow : Buonaparte must show by the evidence of facts, that he is sincere in his desire of peace ; while it is the policy of ministers to employ every effort to disturb his authority, and every insult to provoke his resentment. The only alternative which ministers were willing to accept as the price of peace, is the unconditional restoration of the house of Bourbon. But, if no enlarged view of policy, no dictate of constitutional jealousy can move a British house of commons to institute the proposed inquiry, they owe it to the reputation of the army, whose conduct has never been censured in this country, but whose honour has been cruelly attacked abroad, to investigate the transactions to the bottom,

and lay the blame where it ought to fall. Read the report which has been published in the Petersburg Gazette * of the different actions in Holland, and say whether you are not called upon to vindicate the character of the British army? Do you feel so little for the military fame of your country, as to suffer your brave soldiers to stand in the face of Europe branded with such a stigma? Do you esteem so little the reputation of the gallant officers employed in Holland, the Duke of York, Sir

* PETERSBURGH, OCT. 22.—(*From the Court Gazette.*)—Major General Hessen, from his head quarters at Zypser Schlusen :—

“ I humbly acquaint your imperial Majesty, that on the 4th of September I arrived from Yarmouth with the first division of troops before the Texel. We disembarked immediately in row-boats, and landed all our troops on the 6th at the Helder, though in a violent gale of wind. General Herman had arrived before me, and was at the distance of thirty-five werstes from the Helder, towards Alkmaer. By his orders I joined him on the 7th; and on the 8th, in the morning, at four o'clock, we proceeded in three columns, and attacked the enemy, with a bravery only characteristic to your Majesty's subjects. We drove him from three strong entrenchments, took all the batteries with the bayonet, and entered three strong villages, with the town of Bergen. We had already taken fourteen pieces of cannon, about 1000 prisoners, and killed upwards of 2000 of the enemy. However, all our amunition being exhausted, we could no longer carry on offensive operations against a numerous enemy, who employed all his forces against us, forced the right wing of our allies, who intended to attack at the same time, but who, from causes unknown to me, were two hours too late, which considerably injured the victory which we had already gained. Lieutenant General Herman was made prisoner. I cannot conceal from you, most gracious Sovereign, that the troops of your Majesty are in want of the most necessary articles: I will not, however, pretend to say that this is owing to the want of care of our allies, but rather to their late arrangements, when, contrary to their first plan, they landed all their troops, their own as well as ours, in a crowd, so that it was impossible the small tract of ground which we occupied could furnish us with provisions, and we are under the necessity to wait for supplies from England. We were in want of sufficient artillery and horses, and the troops were not yet recovered from a violent sea-sickness. Our ammunition being exhausted, we had no means of attack and defence but the bayonet; but through the extreme fatigue of our troops, their retreat began in confusion. The commander-in-chief being a prisoner, Lieutenant-General Scherebzw killed, and Major-General Suthof wounded, the chief command devolved on me. I strove to collect our troops, and retired to our first advantageous position in such a manner that the enemy found it impossible to follow. Our whole loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners, amounts to about 3000 men; but the enemy has lost many more; the prisoners taken by the English and ourselves amounting to above 3000 men,” &c.

Ralph Abercrombie, Sir James Pulteney, General Dundas, that excellent officer General Moore, and those who served with him, as to allow the aspersions cast upon their renown in the libellous letter of General Hessen to remain uncontradicted? You owe it to the character of the British nation, to the spirit of the British nation, to the spirit of your troops, you owe it to the honour of the living, to the memory of the dead, to go into an inquiry, which will distinguish those who have been guilty of misconduct and incurred disgrace. I move "That the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to inquire into the causes of the failure of the late expedition to Holland."

Mr. Dundas, Mr. Perceval, and Mr. Addington spoke against the motion—Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Tierney, and Mr. M. A. Taylor, in support of it.

Mr. Sheridan said, that after having been indulged at such length, he should not trespass long on the patience of the house. He was induced principally to rise, from two allusions that had been made to him; one by an hon. gentleman near him (Mr. M. A. Taylor), and one by an hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Addington.) His hon. friend had accused him of being mealy-mouthed—an objection which was seldom made to him; for in general he was accused of being too plain a speaker. But he accused him of having taken a line of candour for which he ought to apologize, in saying, that he did not wish to dispossess ministers of their places, and that the country would not desire to see them dispossessed, even though they might disapprove of their conduct in this expedition. He assured the hon. gentleman that he blamed him without reason. He had no such candour. He sincerely wished to see ministers dispossessed for the good of the country; and if anything that he could urge or say would bring that event about, he would exert every effort in his power. What he had said, was, that in his present motion, he was not prompted to this inquiry *merely* to prove to the country, and to the world, the incapacity of his Majesty's ministers; for it could not redound to national honour or to national benefit to do that, if no other result was to come from it. But the hon. gentleman said that "he was confident the opinion of the country was against his Majesty's ministers in this expedition, and he was sincerely desirous of turning them out, and of seeing the gentlemen on that side of the house pass over to the other." In this, said Mr. Sheridan, it is truly creditable to the hon. gentleman, that he

would not pass over with us : he would rest in the mid-way ; he would rest in that chair, which it requires the greatest talents and the greatest respect to fill. Now, as to the allusion from the hon. gentleman on the other side, his chief objection to the motion was, that it had not been made in October last, before the failure of the expedition was known, or after it was known, that he had not made it after parliament was adjourned ! He had given notice of his motion on the first day after the meeting. It was for ministers to answer for its being so long delayed ; since they, and not he, had made the adjournment. It had been objected to him, that he had made use of the word “ disgrace.” Surely, in the use of this term, he had expressed himself clearly with regard to all the officers and men engaged in the execution of the enterprise, and had limited the word to the planners only. Nothing could be more clear than that the mere failure of a military expedition was not in itself a disgrace ;—a town might be besieged and taken, though the garrison had displayed the greatest courage and perseverance. Circumstances might defeat the most obstinate valour ; but what he thought necessarily brought disgrace along with it, was, when a country was deluded by promises which were not kept—when a people was tempted by offers of protection to show themselves, and to manifest their sentiments ; and when, instead of the protection held out to them, the planners of an expedition were forced to capitulate for their own retreat. This was what he ascribed to the character of the late expedition. They entered North Holland, holding out to the inhabitants offers of protection, and inviting them to rise. It was true, indeed, that the people did not obey the invitation ; but suppose they had, and that trusting to the promise of Great Britain, they had come forward, and that afterwards they had been abandoned, would not the nation have been disgraced ? Would it not have been responsible for all the blood that must have flowed from such an issue ? If France had invaded Ireland with forty-five thousand men, and had professed, as the British professed to the Dutch, that they had come to rescue them from oppression and tyranny—the mere supposition gave rise to a melancholy sentiment ; for they had seen, with all their pretended knowledge of human nature, that forty-five thousand men had not induced the Dutch to give up the horrors of French fraternity, or to prefer the friendship of

Great Britain to the evils under which they groaned. But would any man say, that if forty-five thousand French had landed in Ireland, during the late insurrection there, British influence would have been as great upon the people of Ireland, as French influence, with all its iniquity, was upon the Dutch? If forty-five thousand French had landed in Ireland, had held out offers of protection to the people, and had afterwards been forced to enter into a capitulation for their own escape, would any man say that they would not have been disgraced, and they would not have been answerable for all the horrors, the whippings, the half-hangings, and the whole-hangings, that took place after the rebellion in that miserable country? In like manner, he affixed the term disgrace upon the men who, without the certainty of keeping their word, boasted of their power, and committed the nation by their folly and their incapacity. Much had been said about the diversion which this made—and *diversion* was a favourite expression of ministers. Three objects were stated to have been in view in the expedition, two of which were said to have been obtained—he denied this fact. Two of the objects were incompatible; if it was one of our objects to replace the stadtholder, it could not be our object to take their navy. But it was a diversion: it forced the French to send their troops into Holland, and thus we assisted the allies in another quarter. What! would not the French have sent troops into Holland but for this expedition? Away, then, with French oppression! They could leave the Dutch, then, to themselves. But, if the expedition was meant as a diversion, Holland, of all other places, was the worst for a diversion; since, by the nature of the country, a very inferior body of troops could successfully resist a greatly superior force. He would agree that it was a fair thing to call a descent diversion, where, landing on an enemy's shore, you drew great bodies of men from other quarters, and kept them in play; but it was quite another thing when, having landed with the professed object of replacing an exiled authority, and having failed, you came home and called it a diversion. You had no right to call it by such a name. But it was to be repeated! What, after the trial which has been made? And never was a trial so completely made of the dispositions of any people. Could insanity itself think of repeating the experiment? After having entered the country, not merely

with a superior force, but with a force so greatly superior, that if the people were, in their hearts, at all disposed to come over to the British, they had every temptation—if not a man was found disposed to trust us, could it be believed that, after the experience they had had, they would *now* come, if the experiment were to be repeated? Mr. Sheridan concluded by expressing his surprise at the conduct of ministers upon this occasion. He did not expect that they would endeavour to have made the inquiry nugatory, but that they would have coloured their indisposition to enter into the investigation with some plausible pretext. He was disappointed. The house had seen the ground they had taken, and the country would see their motives. He lamented, for the sake of the brave army, and for the honour of the nation, that they thought it consistent with common decency to get rid of the subject by such means.

The house divided—ayes 45; noes 216.

FEBRUARY 17.

GRANT TO THE EMPEROR OF GERMANY, &c., FOR THE LOAN
TO FOREIGN POWERS.

Mr. Pitt moved for a sum not exceeding £500,000 to enable his Majesty to make such advances as might be necessary for the purpose of insuring, at an early period, a vigorous co-operation of the Emperor of Germany, the Elector of Bavaria, &c., in the ensuing campaign against the common enemy.

MR. SHERIDAN said, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) who has just sat down, and said “he rose only to save himself from misinterpretation,” has declared, that he has no objection to peace. Now I should expect a warmer declaration from that hon. gentleman, when I recollect his conduct on a former occasion. I recollect a time, when he came to rebuke the violence of the minister.—[Mr. Sheridan read a motion made by Mr. Wilberforce, for an address to his Majesty, praying, that the government of France might not be made an obstacle to peace, when an opportunity should arrive.]—Now, as the hon. gentleman is anxious to escape from the charge of inconsistency, I should expect he would state the reason for this difference in his conduct. Then the government was a provisional government; a government, from its nature, not intended to stand; a government of furious jacobins; and yet the hon. gentleman implored to supplicate his Majesty, that it might not be suffered to stand in the way of peace; but now, when it is of a less objectionable

description, he justifies his friend from an arrogant, violent, inconsiderate, and I hope he will not find an unfortunate note, refusing to accept peace from such a government. An hon. gentleman who has spoken in the debate put a very just question, whether the country will be governed by words, and not by facts? I admit it right that it should not be so governed, but I unfortunately have the authority of the present government that it is. The hon. gentleman spoke with great eloquence, I may say irritation; but never did I see eloquence so misapplied. He has shown his dexterity in driving the subject from its proper basis; he guides, urges, and inflames the passions of his hearers on jacobinical principles; but he does not show how they bear on the present question. He has not dared to say, that so far as respects the restoration of the house of Bourbon, we have suffered by the defection of Russia. What that power may still do with regard to La Vendee, or reconciling the people of Ireland to the union, I do not inquire; but with regard to the great object, the restoration of monarchy in France, we are *minus* the Emperor of Russia; that power may be considered as extinct. Is it then to be endured, that the minister shall come down and ask for a subsidy under such circumstances? Is it to be endured, that we shall be told we are at war for the restoration of monarchy in France, that Russia is pledged to the accomplishment of that purpose, that Russia is the rock on which we stand, that the magnanimous Emperor of Russia, the gallantry of whose troops, and the skill of whose great generals, place them above all the troops and generals in Europe, is all we have to rest on? Is it to be endured, I say, that this rock should prove as brittle as sand, and that those who held this language should come down in a week after, and say, "give us two millions and a half to subsidize Germany, and then we shall have a better army than we had with Russia?" After such unqualified praise upon Russia, and after her defection, is not such language inconsistent, absurd, and preposterous? If Germany possessed these forces before, why were they not called into action? and if not, why are we to subsidize the rabble of Germany? But who is the person that applies for this subsidy? As to the Elector of Bavaria, I leave him out of the question. It is the Emperor of Germany. Is there anything in his conduct and character to incline us to listen to him. I think not; and for these two rea-

sons : first, he applied once on a false pretence ; and, secondly, he failed in performing his stipulated engagement. What was his false pretence ? He said he could not open the campaign without the pecuniary assistance of this country ; and yet he did so, and displayed more vigour, energy, and resources than ever. Now, if to this we add experience, and the evidence of facts, when he dared, though bound to this country, to break faith with her, and make a separate peace, does it not furnish a reasonable cause for declining to grant a subsidy to such a power ? The hon. gentleman is offended at our connecting the situation of the country, and the present scarcity with the question of war. I do not know to what extent this principle is to be carried. I see no more objection to state the pressure in this particular from the continuance of the war, than there would be to advance the increase of the public debt, the situation of the finances, or any other of those reasons so often repeated, without its having been ever objected, that they were of an improper kind. Sir, I say, there is no more impropriety in urging this argument, than in urging ministers not to press the people too far, but to apportion the burden to their strength to bear it. What has my hon. friend said ? We see an opulent commercial prosperity ; but look over the country, and we behold barracks and broth-houses the cause and the effect, the poverty and distress of the country ; for surely it will not be contended, but that among the calamities of war are to be reckoned families left without support, and thrown upon charity for subsistence. That the war is unnecessary, as being useless, is self-evident, and nobody can deny it. But, say they, Bonaparte has taken us at an unguarded moment : we do not object to peace, but we have a fear and jealousy of concluding one, except with the house of Bourbon : in a peace concluded with it we should have confidence, but we can have none in the present government of France. I say, were that event arrived, and the house of Bourbon seated on the throne, the minister should be impeached who would disband a single soldier ; and that it would be equally criminal to make peace under a new king as under a republican government, unless her heart and mind were friendly to it. France, as a republic, may be a bad neighbour ; but, than monarchical France, a more foul and treacherous neighbour never was. Is it, then, sufficient to say, let monarchy be restored, and let peace be given to all Eu-

rope? I come now, sir, to the object of the war as expressed in the note. It is there stated that the restoration of monarchy is the *sine qua non* of present negotiation; and then it proceeds to say, "that it is possible we may hereafter treat with some other form of government, after it shall be tried by experience and the evidence of facts." What length of time this trial may require is impossible to ascertain; yet we have, I acknowledge, something of experience here by which we may form a kind of conjecture.

At the time of the negotiation at Lisle, the then republican government had stood two years and a half. Previous to that time, it had been declared improper to enter into negotiation with it; but from experience, and the evidence of facts, ministers discovered that it was then become good and proper to treat with; and yet so it happened, that, immediately after this judgment in its favour, it crumbled to pieces. Here, then, we have a tolerable rule to judge by, and may presume, on the authority of this case, that something more than two years and a half must expire, before any new government will be pronounced stable. The note, sir, then proceeds to pay a handsome compliment to the line of princes who maintained peace at home, and, to round the period handsomely, it should have added, "tranquillity abroad;" but, instead of this, are substituted "respect and consideration," by which we are to understand exactly what is meant by the consideration with which the note is subscribed, being equivalent to "I am, sir, with the highest respect, and sincerest enmity, yours,"—for, sir, this consideration, which the line of princes maintained, consisted in involving all the powers within their reach and influence in war and contentions. The note then proceeds to state, "that this restoration of monarchy would secure to France the uninterrupted possession of her ancient territory;" by which we are to understand, I suppose, we would renounce our Quiberon expeditions. In this note, sir, the gentlemen seemed to have clubbed their talents, one found grammar, another logic, and a third some other ingredient; but is it not strange that they should all forget that the house of Bourbon, instead of maintaining peace and tranquillity in Europe, was always the disturber of both? In the very last transaction of monarchical France—I mean her conduct in the American war, his Majesty's speech begins thus:—"France, the disturber of the tranquillity of Europe". But were

a person to judge hereafter, from the history of the present time, of the war we carried on, and the millions we expended for the monarchy of France, he would be led to conclude that it was our nearest and dearest friend. Is there anything, then, in the knowledge of human nature, from which we can infer that, with the restoration of monarchy in France, a total change in the principles of the people would take place? or that ministers of the new king would renounce them? What security have we that a change of principles will take place in the restored monarch, and that he will not act upon the principles cherished by his ancestors? But if this security is effected by maiming France, does the right hon. gentleman think that the people of France would submit to it? Does he not know that even the emigrants have that partiality for the grandeur of their country, that even they cannot restrain their joy at republican victories? But with regard to the practicability of the course to be pursued, the right hon. gentleman says, he is looking forward to a time when there shall be no dread of jacobin principles. I ask whether he does not think, from the fraud, oppression, tyranny, and cruelty with which the conduct of France has marked them, that they are not now nearly dead, extinct, and detested? But who are the jacobins? Is there a man in this country who has, at any time, opposed ministers, who has resisted the waste of public money, and the prostitution of honours, that has not been branded with the name? The whig club are jacobins (a dead silence). Of this there can be no doubt; for a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham), on that account, struck his name off the list. The Friends of the People are jacobins—(a cry of “hear, hear!”). I am one of the Friends of the People, and, consequently, am a jacobin. The hon. gentleman pledged himself never to treat with jacobin France until we had

“Toto certatum est corpore regni.”

Now, he did treat with France at Lisle and Paris; but, perhaps, there were not jacobins in France at either of these times. You, then, the Friends of the People, are the jacobins. I do think, sir, jacobin principles never existed much in this country; and, even admitting they had, I say they have been found so hostile to true liberty, that, in proportion as we love it—and whatever may be said, I must still consider liberty an inestimable blessing—we must hate and detest these principles. But more, I do not think they

even exist in France; they have there died the best of deaths—a death I am more pleased to see than if it had been effected by a foreign force—they have stung themselves to death, and died by their own poison. But the hon. gentleman, arguing from experience of human nature, tells us that jacobin principles are such, that the mind that is once infected with them, no quarantine—no cure can cleanse. Now, if this be the case, and that there are, according to Mr. Burke's statement, eighty thousand incorrigible jacobins in England, we are in a melancholy situation; the right hon. gentleman must continue the war while one of the present generation remains, and, consequently, we cannot, for that period, expect those rights to be restored to us, to the suspensions and restrictions of which the hon. gentleman attributes the suppression of these principles. A pretty consolation this, truly! Now, I contend that they do exist in France to the same extent as before, or nearly. If this, then, be the case, what danger can be apprehended? But if this, then, be true, and that Buonaparte, the child and champion of jacobin principles, as he is called, be resolved to uphold them, upon what ground does the hon. gentleman presume to hope for the restoration of the house of Bourbon? So far I have argued on the probability of the object; but the hon. gentleman goes on, and says, "there is no wish to restore the monarchy without the consent of the people." Now, if this be the case, is it not better to leave the people to themselves? for, if armies are to interfere, how can we ascertain that it is a legitimate government, established with the pure consent of the people? As to Buonaparte, whose character has been represented as marked with fraud and insincerity, has he not made treaties with the emperor and observed them? Is it not his interest to make peace with us? Do you not think he feels it? And can you suppose that, if peace were made, he has not power to make it be observed by the people of France? And do not you think that the people of France are aware that an infraction of that peace would bring with it a new order of things, and a renewal of those calamities from which they are now desirous to escape? But, sir, on the character of Buonaparte I have better evidence than the intercepted letters. I appeal to Carnot, whether the instructions given with respect to the conduct to be observed to the emperor, were not moderate, open, and magnanimous?—(Here Mr. She-

ridan read an extract from Carnot's pamphlet, in support of his assertion.)—With regard to the late note, in answer to his proposal to negotiate, it is foolish, insulting, and undignified. It is evidence to me that the hon. gentlemen themselves do not believe his character to be such as they describe it; for, if they did, they must know their language would irritate such a mind. The passions will mix themselves with reason in the conduct of men, and they cannot say that they will not yet be obliged to treat with Buonaparte. I am warranted in saying this, for I do believe in my heart, that, since the defection of Russia, ministers have been repenting of their answer; I say so, because I do not consider them so obstinate and headstrong as to persevere with as much ardour for the restoration of monarchy, as when they were pledged with Russia. There was not a nation in Europe which ministers did not endeavour to draw into the war. On what was such conduct founded, but on jacobinical principles? Indeed, ministers, by negotiating at one time with a jacobinical government in France, plainly proved they were not so hostile to its principles as they would now wish to appear. Prussia and Austria, as well as this country, have acted also on jacobinical principles. The conduct of this country towards Ireland has been perfectly jacobinical. How, then, can we define these principles, when persons who would not disavow them, fall, by some fatality, into an unavoidable acknowledgment of them? The objections that have been raised to peace have been entirely jacobinical. If we seek for peace, it must be done in the spirit of peace. We are not to make it a question who was the first aggressor, or endeavour to throw the blame that may attach to us on our enemy. Such circumstances should be consigned to oblivion, as tending to no one useful purpose. France, in the beginning of the revolution, had conceived many romantic notions; she was to put an end to war, and produce, by a pure form of government, a perfectibility of mind which before had never been realised. The monarchs of Europe, seeing the prevalence of these new principles, trembled for their thrones. France, also, perceiving the hostility of kings to her projects, supposed she could not be a republic without the overthrow of thrones. Such has been the regular progress of cause and effect; but who was the first aggressor? with whom the jealousy first arose, need not now be a matter of discussion. Both the repub-

lic, and the monarchs who opposed her, acted on the same principles: the latter said they must exterminate jacobins, and the former that they must destroy monarchs. From this source have all the calamities of Europe flowed; and it is now a waste of time and argument to inquire further into the subject. Now, sir, let us come to matter of fact; has not France renounced and reprobated those jacobin principles which created her so many enemies? Are not all her violent invectives against regular governments come into disesteem? Has not the Abbé Sièyes, who wrote in favour of monarchy—has not Buonaparte condemned the jacobinical excesses of the revolution in the most pointed manner; the very men who have had so large a share in the formation of the present government? But I maintain that Buonaparte himself is also a friend to peace. There is, in his correspondence with the ministers of this country a total renunciation of jacobinical principles. In the dread therefore of these, I can see no argument for the continuance of war. A man who is surprised at the revolution of sentiment in individuals or nations, shows but little experience. Such instances occur every day. Neither would a wise man always attach to principles the most serious consequences. Left to themselves, the absurd and dangerous would soon disappear, and wisdom establish herself only the more secure on their ruins. I am a friend to peace at this time, because I think Bonaparte would be as good a friend and neighbour to this country as ever were any of the Bourbons. I think also, that there can be no time when we can hope to have better terms. If the King of Prussia should join France, such an alliance would greatly change the state of things; and from her long and honourable neutrality, in spite of the remonstrance and entreaties of this country, an event of that kind is by no means unlikely to happen. It must be considered also, that the first consul of France must feel no little portion of resentment towards this country, arising from the indignity with which his overtures of negotiation have been treated; it is not improbable that, to satisfy his revenge, he would make large sacrifices to the house of Austria, that he might contend more successfully against this country. Such are my fears and opinions; but I am unhappily in the habit of being numbered with the minority, and therefore their consequences are considerably diminished. But there have been

occasions when the sentiments of the minority of this house have been those of the people at large ; one, for instance, when a war was prevented with Russia concerning Oczakow. The minority told the minister, that the sentiments of the country were contrary to those of the majority ; and the fact justified them in the assertion ; the dispute was abandoned. In the year 1797, the opinions of the minority on peace were those of the people, and I believe the same coincidence exists now upon the same subject.

For the motion, 162 ; against it, 19.

FEBRUARY 19.

SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT.

The second reading of this bill was moved by the attorney-general.

MR. SHERIDAN said, that he was more eager on the opening of the debate for arguments in support of the motion than he could be now, as it was better to speak after strange arguments, such as he had just heard, than after no arguments at all. He listened with all respect and attention, as he was in hopes to find from the declaration of a gentleman (Mr. H. Lascelles) that the importance of this subject would strike the house, and produce an ample discussion. He observed that that gentleman just after quitted the house. That hon. gentleman expressed his satisfaction at the increasing loyalty of the nation, and thought that much of that loyalty was owing to the wise measures of administration. The inference from which, in his opinion was, that the greater the number of those men that were free from jacobin principles, the more should they be entitled to prosecution. He would not wonder if on such reasoning it was said, that because the minority of the house of commons was inferior to the majority, the minority should be *gagged*. That hon. gentleman strengthens his argument by adding, that because the majority of the kingdom does not steal, he would repeal the laws against stealing, and therefore infers, that notwithstanding the loyalty of the many, the suspension should not be repealed on account of the few. On our part it is answered, that if we wanted to repeal the sedition and treason laws, such an argument would be good ! and I am sure, from such arguments, that he could not give the subject that full attention it required."

He heard an hon. gentleman (Mr. Sturges), whom he hoped to hear often, argue the nature of French principles, observing, that the French revolution was different from every other. He would remark, in turn, that the example of those principles cannot operate on the people of England. Their humane minds were not susceptible of an infection so terrible in its effects. And here was the whole bearing of the question; and on this consideration we were called upon to suspend the Habeas Corpus act, to remove the main-stay of the British constitution. Though there might at one time have been a number of men infected with jacobin principles, yet gentlemen on the other side of the house would admit, that the examples of perfidy, cruelty, and atrocity on the part of France, might have since brought those principles into hatred and detestation. But some hon. gentlemen are of opinion, that jacobinism is of such a nature that it cannot be changed. The practices of those very gentlemen might inform them, that the practices which are called jacobinical are not altogether of such an incorrigible kind. The right hon. the chancellor of the exchequer at one time was very eager in parliamentary reform, and thought no good administration could ever be formed without such a reform. Yet now, as if it had performed *quarantine*, he had changed his principles and opinions, and finds a very good administration made up from such materials. Another right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wnydham), now on the right hand of his right hon. friend, once said of him, that all his robes of state, and all his pomp of eloquence were not sufficient to conceal his filthy *dowlas*, or render him a fit ally for him; he too has changed his principles! In reasoning on the principles of government, he did not think it fair to conclude, that because a corrupt people, debased under a despotic state, had broken and then dashed about the chains that held them, the people of England, accustomed to a mild and beneficent government, should be so restrained that their liberties should be ripped up and curtailed from mere unfounded suspicion. It could not be inferred, that because a wolf had committed depredation on a fold, a man should take down his dwelling, when the remedy would be to chain up this animal; or because the fire had burnt down a wooden bridge, that we should take down one built of solid stone. Nor should it be inferred, by parity of reasoning, that because the licentiousness

of France had demolished all that was excellent in human institutions, the freedom of Englishmen should do the same mischief; for in all those cases it was the same. He could not forget the English constitution. The people of England were not slaves broke loose from their chains, not rushing from despotism into anarchy and disorder. Of the votes of the commons he always had a respectful and due opinion; but with respect to committees selected from the minister's friends, he could not but observe, that with prejudices on their minds, and a bias from their connections, it was hardly possible that a just decision could be obtained; and such ever struck him on the perusal of the reports of those select committees. He had also the same dislike to another report (in the lords), in which were depicted pikes and such things as frightfully fill the imagination with dread and horror. The learned gentleman (the attorney general) seemed little disposed to pay any attention to the verdict of a jury. This jury had negatived the report of a select committee, and he preferred that verdict to the reports. The opinion of the judge (late chief justice Eyre) said on that occasion, that this mighty conspiracy turned out to be a conspiracy perfectly insignificant, a conspiracy without men, money, leaders, and even destitute of designs in their schemes; their rendezvous a back-garret; their arms a few muskets, and their exchequer about £10 15s. Such was its formidable appearance, and so inactive, that the learned judge said they even wanted zeal in the undertaking. He then called the attention of the house to the situation of those who were imprisoned under the act. And here he would ask, whether the attorney general, who was versed in law and history, had ever read or heard of sham-plots and conspiracies? and if he had, was it not possible for them to return again? These were the instruments by which ministers were enabled to carry on the war, to exercise a corrupt influence, and, by alarming the landed and moneyed interests with risings of the people, to govern the country with a system of terror. Let no gentleman then ask, what motives can influence such measures, when it is to such measures ministers owe all their power. And is it not surprising to hear gentlemen talk of liberty of speech remaining (in allusion to Mr. Wilberforce), when fifty persons cannot meet to talk together? Whatever may be said in favour of our remaining liberties, he would maintain that the act of habeas

corpus was the chief. A gentleman more remarkable for the pith and vigour of his expressions than for the neatness of them, said, that "the breath of the nostrils of administration lay in Mr. Pitt's tongue;" and he would say, that however the muscle or sinew lay in other parts, the heart's blood of the constitution lay in the act of habeas corpus. For if ministers can commit, without any other process than their own suspicion, this foul principle may be pushed to the most dangerous extent; and if a man is once considered as a leading man in society of any kind, he may be exposed to attack and arrest from suspicion alone. An hon. gentleman (Mr. Sturges) has given a precedent from the reign of King William, by no means applicable to the present period, and which, adopted as such, must fall with a double edge. He was astonished to hear no difference made between the times. The majority of the nation at that period were jacobites. Is there a man that will not confess the jacobins are a contemptible minority? The jacobites were composed of the nobility, the landed interest, and were formidable in their principles and opposition to King William, and many of them suffered on the scaffold. The act made at the time of the conspiracy on the life of the then monarch, was a specific act to confine those whose moral guilt was ascertained; but this act shuts up every man upon vague suspicion. The whole of the arguments of administration rest upon the existence of jacobin principles in France, and so long the act now proposed is to be continued. The absurdity of this was equally astonishing and alarming; it was a satisfaction to him that it was not his. Mr. Sheridan then noticed the argument of Mr. Canning on a former night, respecting the conduct of the nation in the case of King James II. He here observed, that the hon. gentleman did not reason correctly; for he assumed a fact, where he (Mr. Sheridan) only put a supposition. The repeal of this act was impracticable in either case of sedition or tranquillity. In the former it would be urged, that it was necessary to restore peace, and in the latter case it will be always, as now demanded, "would you remove the means by which the country has so much benefited?" Mr. Sheridan then reviewed the state of Ireland under Lord Fitzwilliam, and said, that the outrages, cruelties, and atrocities, were not occasioned by French principles, but by the rooted hatred of the people to British councils. The effects of

such councils were predicted by Earl Fitzwilliam ; all that rebellion which burst out in the small space of twenty-four hours, like characters written in lemon-juice on a sheet of white paper, and held to the fire, as described by the secretary at war. I might be permitted to ask—"Heh, Mr. Secretary at War, where did you come by those amorous mysteries? for they belong not to your office, though you are accustomed to read dispatches in cypher." He showed and proved before that the discontents in Ireland were not the offspring of French principles, but resentments strongly engraved on the hearts of the Irish against this country. He then deprecated the minister from such means of outrage to the loyalty of the nation, whose security was not less lodged in the hearts than in the arms of its volunteer corps. The country was no less upon its guard in its mind than it was in fact, and had little at any time to dread from a few contemptible ruffians in a cellar, against the security or laws of the country. This power in the hands of ministers was absurd ; yet, he was sorry to see it existing, as he would wish to guard against the effects it might produce. He regretted to read the reign of even Titus, and was sorry almost not to see that reign a tissue of crimes ; that despotism might be discredited wherever it did exist. He then entered on the abuse of the power lodged in the hands of ministers, evidenced in the case of Colonel Despard, and the infamous conduct of Aris, the keeper of the prison. Another abuse of power was under the alien bill ; this bill, said to be for political purposes, was perverted into an instrument of family protection, as persons who had paid their addresses to the daughters of gentlemen were on that account taken up under this bill, and sent out of the kingdom. He was ready to acquit the noble duke (Portland) at the head of that office, of being capable, from his character or temper, of such a proceeding ; but such, under him, was one of the abuses made of it. He had to mention another abuse, which, though difficult to relate without ridicule, yet showed the spirit of this power in the hands of ministers. A man of the name of Patterson, who had a shop at Manchester, kept a tilted cart, over which he subscribed the names of Pitt and Patterson. The man, who was known to have no partner in his trade, was asked what he meant by the name of Pitt on his cart, as he had no share in his business? "Ah," replied he, "if he has no share in the business, he has a large

share in the profit of it." On this he was taken up, committed to Cold-bath-fields prison, but some time after liberated, with a strict order not to go within thirty miles of Manchester. Ridiculous as this appeared, it proved serious to the man, and was the ruin of his business! On all the circumstances no new case had been made out why this act should be continued, but many have shown that it should be repealed. Gentlemen should at least defer the farther consideration for a few days, until in decency they could make out some means that would appear plausible, and give, at least, a formal pretext for their proceedings.

Ayes 98; noes 12.

JUNE 10.

BILL FOR PUNISHING AND PREVENTING ADULTERY.

The master of the rolls moved the order of the day for the house going into a committee on an engrossed bill from the lords, for punishing and preventing adultery.

MR. SHERIDAN said, there is no man I am persuaded, sir, in this house, who is not ready to agree with me that this is a subject which deserves to be gravely and maturely considered. I am aware, too, that when professions are held out, that great alterations may be made in a committee upon a bill; it is not the most favourable time to rise in opposition to that bill before it goes into such committee, because it may be said to those who so oppose it, that the very points to which they object may be those which it is intended in the commitment to alter and amend. Sir, I shall very much regret if another opportunity shall be afforded for going into the discussion of such a bill as the present; but if there should be, I shall certainly state my objections to every part of it more at large than I shall think it necessary to do at present. The question now before us is, whether we shall go into a committee? To this proposition it is wished that the house should be induced to accede, by the hope that the alterations which may be made may render the bill more acceptable and more moderate. Now, sir, I take upon me to assert, that no gentleman who has spoken upon the subject has held out any grounds at all to make us believe that such can be the result. We have heard from some, that the law is not to be as it is; from others we have heard sketches of

clauses; from others we have heard general outlines and opinions; but all who have spoken have shown that the bill cannot pass in its present shape. Sir, that the laws with respect to adultery ought not to remain as they are, may be true. But what I contend is this, that it has not been proved that any great or general review of the subject can proceed from such a bill as this. That, upon maturer consideration with the reverend prelates, something better may not be produced, I am not prepared to deny. But there appears to me to have been an evident improvidence, a shameful negligence, on the part of the authors of this measure. It seems as if it had been produced in scorn and contempt, and in defiance of all knowledge and experience. It ill became the authors of it to pass by that first and greatest authority, of whose assistance they ought to have availed themselves. But the bill comes to us in another way. I know that it is not parliamentary to allude to what passes in another house; but I shall contend that the bill which comes to us by unanimous vote, or by a large majority in its favour, would come with a greater weight than one passed by a very small majority.—Recollecting then all these things, we cannot, I contend, be accused of impropriety or presumption in saying we will pause where we are, and oppose going into a bill which appears to us so utterly incorrigible. But there are one or two points upon which I wish to make some observations. When any measure is proposed to a legislative assembly, there are three questions which a prudent legislator will ask himself. First, whether the measure is necessary? Second, whether it is likely to be efficacious? And third, whether it is likely to produce greater evils than those which it is meant to remedy? I will pass by the two last, and proceed to the first. Is the present measure necessary? What! will you extend the penal code, and not prove first that the crime which you propose to punish has increased? Mischievous, indeed, must be the consequence. But, sir, in point of fact, and in fairness of reasoning, the crime in the present case so far from having increased, has been proved to have diminished. The learned gentleman opposite me, in going over a period of thirty years, tells us that in the first ten there were forty-four divorces; in the second ten twenty-three; and in the third ten fifty-two. But to form a right judgment, we must compare the increased number of

marriages, the increase of population, and, undoubtedly, the increase in wealth of the country. The fair inference to be drawn from this comparison will then be, that the crime has diminished. "But," says an hon. gentleman, "it is not proper that the crime should exist at all;" true: but what I demand from those who argue in favour of the present bill is, to show me that what they propose to remove has not operated as a check upon the commission of the crime. This substituted law of honour, which induces the man to marry the woman he has seduced, has been strongly inveighed against; but I desire those who so inveigh against it, to show me whether it has not been one of the causes of the crime having diminished. Will the removal of this law decrease it? Sir, what I complain of most, is, that what is now proposed is all matter of experiment, and that such a proposition, when the crime has been proved to be diminishing, is, to say no more of it, extremely desperate. The hon. gentleman opposite me thinks it an evil that men should set up this law of honour, and he prefers open and avowed vice. Sir, I should think strangely of the morality and honour of that man who, having seduced a married woman, should afterwards scoff at her credulity, leave her to shame and sorrow, send her out an exile and a wanderer, and abandon her to all the horrors of mockery and insult. I should say to him who prefers that kind of morality, that he ought indeed to have a great stock of religion in his heart, to reconcile such principles and practice to his conscience. I should say that such conduct was a grosser violation of all moral feeling than the very act of adultery itself. The hon. gentleman has urged, with great truth, the obligations the country is under to certain illustrious personages, for the example of domestic virtues which they have uniformly afforded. Is it not true too, I would ask, that the women of this country were never more correct in their conduct than at present? Is there any man, I would also ask, who, when it is attempted to be contended that the days of Charles II. were purity to these, does not know that assertion to be an untruth? If that be the case, is it no slight thing to throw out this unmannerly and unmanly slander upon the morality of the country? Is it nothing to hold forth, that the example which the illustrious personages upon the throne have for so long a period afforded, has produced no good effect; and that, instead of having been

attended with any beneficial consequences, we are forced, after a period of forty years, to make a law to stop the progress of adultery? The hon. gentleman has described a husband treating his wife ill, and has added, "that if a seducer had not intervened, the wife, by her gentleness, her meekness, and her virtues, might at last have reclaimed the husband." Sir, that there would be frequent examples of this forbearance and perseverance on the part of the wife, I am not yet prepared to admit. But the hon. gentleman says, "ought not the seducer to be punished? Yet he cannot be, if this ill usage is proved against the husband." Sir, I will not answer, whether the seducer ought to be punished, because I contend that he cannot be under this bill. A learned gentleman has talked of exemplary damages being given. I do not pretend to be much of a lawyer; but, in my opinion, talking of exemplary damages in civil actions, is talking exemplary nonsense. Who told juries that they were to be the *custodes morum*?—I will not surmise who pressed this into the minds of juries, but he who states this doctrine is responsible for the effect it produces. Sir, I know it will be said that these objectionable parts may be removed in a committee—and this is what I complain of, that these bills come to us in a shape so little resembling that in which they are to pass, that, like the crafty tyrant, in Shakspeare, they may say to us—

"Judge not by what I am, but what I shall become!"

Sir, a judge may think it proper to tell a jury, that £20,000—that a whole fortune—is not sufficient to repair the injury a husband has sustained. A jury, however, may think otherwise; and only give £2,000. The same man may afterwards, by the present bill, come under an indictment before the same judge, who may deem it to be his duty to make up for this supposed deficiency on the part of the juries; and this is one of the evils which this bill may tend to produce. A learned friend of mine, who has argued in favour of the measure, has talked of the harmonious whole—but what is the fact? Is there not this anomaly? The seducer is only to be prosecuted by one individual; and who is this individual? the husband, who, in other parts of the bill, may be supposed to be in collusion. How many years of solitary confinement the seducer is to be punished with we are not told; but, on his trial for the misdemeanour,

he calls in the husband to cross-examine him with respect to his treatment of his wife ; to go over his whole life from the commencement of his marriage, to question him relative to every part of his conduct. The result of this will, I contend, be such a disinclination, that few husbands will consent to put themselves in a situation to proceed to such indictments ; of course, then there can be no divorce ; but if he does proceed to an indictment, and the seducer should make out that the husband has afforded provocation to his wife, in that case there can be no divorce. Here then will be this strange case. The public wrong will be proved ; the adultery will be proved ; the seducer, however, will not be punished ; the wife will not be punished ; and where then will be the harmonious whole ? Sir, my objection to the measure is, that it is dashing rashly and desperately at experiment ; and is there any man, I would ask, who would consent to change the morals of our countrywomen for those of the women of any other nation in the world ? I say then, sir, that the bill is unnecessary ; I hope it will not be suffered to proceed to another discussion ; but if it does, I shall go into it more at length, and I pledge myself to show that the principle of it is bad ; that it will be unjust in its operation ; that it is cruel, unchristian-like, and severe, and in an inverse proportion to the degree of guilt ; that it is hostile to the doctrines of the protestant church ; and that it is calculated to increase that evil which it proposes to remedy. For these reasons, sir, I give the bill my most hearty and decided opposition.

The house divided ; for the chairman leaving the chair 104 ; against it 143.

JUNE 23.

MONASTIC INSTITUTION BILL.

MR. SHERIDAN said, he had been listening with great attention to every person who had spoken on the subject now before the house, and particularly to the two hon. and learned gentlemen who had taken part in it. He should neither follow them nor any other person in the detail of their arguments, but endeavour to bring the question now before the house into as narrow a compass as the thing was capable of. By the question, he meant the substance of that on which the decision of the house

was to be taken. The hon. and learned gentleman who had just sat down, had gone, he apprehended, considerably beside the question, which really was this: "Whether there does exist at this moment, in the conduct of the catholics in this country, any ground to blame them? Whether, in a word, any body could fairly impute to any of them any misconduct whatever?"—No gentleman had yet met this question, and yet every gentleman seemed to admit that this was the point for the discussion of the house. One hon. member said, "the house should not proceed unless they saw actual misconduct." On what ground was the house to decide that this measure was necessary? Were they to proceed on general rumour or hearsay? Were they to proceed on a regulation bill, merely upon confidence in those who said it was necessary? Or, would the advocates of the bill come at once to that short issue, "was there any misconduct in the catholics that rendered this or any regulation necessary?" Whether monasteries should or should not exist, he should not at present argue; neither should he now say anything upon the question, whether parliament should or should not at any time prevent them. These were points that appeared to him to be foreign to the question before the house, because that was a question of regulation. What he first should humbly insist upon was this—that there ought to be made out a case showing the necessity of this measure, or of some measure, before the house agreed to any alteration in the law upon the subject. The learned gentleman who spoke last, had called this an enabling bill; he did not think that learned gentleman had perused it very accurately, nor very attentively examined what the law was already upon this point; if he had, he would have found there was no necessity for this enabling bill. As to most of the objects of the bill, or rather those which were supposed to be the objects of it, and their residence, he must observe there was no power to remove them, for they were natural-born subjects of this realm, and for the same reason they would not be put under the operation of the alien act. But there was one great mistake which the friends of the bill fell into, that of confounding the idea of vows with legal obligations in these nunneries, or monastic institutions; whereas there was, in this country, no such thing as a legal obligation attached to a vow. There was no legal power of attaching any civil punishment to those who broke

their vows in this country. Any number of ladies might meet together, and make a vow that they would die old maids; but they could not be bound by law to observe that vow. In other countries, if a nun run away, or married, she was punishable by the civil power; but here there was no such law, and therefore the idea was idle of making an alteration in the law upon that subject, because, upon that subject, there was no law. Many compliments had been paid to the hon. baronet who brought in this bill. No man could think higher of his virtues and talents than he did; but, on the present occasion, he saw no room for compliments on the delicacy and forbearance of the framers of the bill; for sure he was that it was fraught with everything that must insult the pride and alarm the feelings of the Roman catholics of this country, than which description of the community none was more exemplary in their conduct as men and as subjects. It was telling the Roman catholic gentlemen, that we understood their interests, and could direct their feelings better than themselves, and that we knew best how and where their children should be educated. But, after all, in what does this delicacy, so much panegyricized, consist?—in abstaining from specifying particular places, or particular persons, and from exposing those whom we have taken under our protection to popular indignation and rage. This delicacy and forbearance would have no such effect; on the contrary, he would contend that it would expose both foreign and English Roman catholics to be victims of popular fury. The measure must be felt as such by those who recollect the horrors that disgraced the year 1780. Under the pretext of religious alarm, what was then sought for but plunder, massacre, and firings? If once aroused, who can control the savage madness of such a mob, or prevent its running into a general undistinguishing cry against the whole body of Roman catholics? This reflection must make the promoters of the measure shudder at the consequences which it is more than possible it may produce. At least it should induce the house to pause before they proceeded too hastily to adopt it, or any measure that might risk such horrible and incalculable mischief. But it will still be said there is no harm, no mischief to be dreaded from it. He would ask, where was its necessity? Without a necessity, a well-proved necessity, no legislative act should be proceeded to. But of late every gentleman has become

a lawmaker, whether new laws were called for or not. If laws are enacted without the plea of necessity, or of some evident good to be derived from it, the multiplying of such laws is only spreading imbecility over the rest of your statutes. Without a strong case were previously made out, he must again entreat gentlemen not to lend their countenance to a measure which, if duly considered, may be found pregnant with the most horrible mischiefs. When the mob, in the year 1780, rose against the catholics, they had parliament against them; for parliament was then employed in repealing laws that bore hard upon the Roman catholics; at present they would find the house of commons, at least, countenancing injurious suspicions of that class of their fellow-subjects. He was induced to oppose this bill, because he did not wish the catholics to be exposed to popular indignation. Would any man, who remembered what happened in 1780, tell him there was no danger to be apprehended from a furious, plundering, desolating and proscribing mob, with the cry of "No popery?" Would any man tell him there was no probability that any designing, artful demagogue, should arise, and pretend that the present high price of provisions was owing to the catholics in this country? And who would answer for the consequences? It was not enough to say that the people were now more enlightened than they were; a mob, whenever they were put in motion, had but one way of proceeding, and that was to take a catch-word, and, under it, to plunder and destroy wherever they proceeded. All this he saw at least as a possibility, by encouraging these legislative provisions without necessity. It had been said that, in the time of James II., there was but one catholic in this country to an hundred protestants, and that the number was the same, or nearly the same now; but did any man seriously mean to say that the danger at this time from the catholic religion was the same as at that time? He had heard a good deal said in praise of toleration, as it was called, in this country. He confessed freely he was almost induced to hate the word, because it was but another name for mitigating persecution. The true sentence of justice was "Freedom of worship." As to the provision in the bill which authorises magistrates to visit and inspect the Roman catholic seminaries, he could think of nothing that more rudely violated all decorum and delicacy. Why not visit and inspect the places of education of other sects?

or why hold out the falsehood that the catholics were more to be feared? It was wonderful how the framers of the bill seemed to be influenced only by shadows and alarms, and never thought of anything like proofs to justify the necessity of the measure. How came it to pass that, on this occasion, they were so regardless of the evidence of facts? He had facts, however, to adduce, though he must beg pardon of those new legislators for attempting to obtrude any, as they seemed to them to be wholly unnecessary. Mr. Sheridan then proceeded to read a number of documents, by which it appeared that all mistresses of the Roman catholic boarding-schools had been asked the question, "whether they had any protestant young ladies under their care, or whether they were in the habit of admitting them as pupils?" The uniform answer was, "none; none; never." They were also asked "if they offered to educate, or did really educate protestant young women for nothing?" They were all anxious to be exculpated from this charge of charity: they never were guilty of such a thing, except in one, or perhaps two instances, and then the young women were catholics, not protestants. A foolish alarm had also been sent abroad respecting the number of emigrant clergy now in this country; they were said to amount to five thousand; and persons had even been absurd enough to say, that in one county alone they had converted two thousand housemaids. How this wonderful conversion was brought about, he could not well conceive. The emigrant priests spoke but little English, and our housemaids, he believed, spoke as little French. Besides, it was nothing to the purpose to bring in the conduct of the emigrant priests on this occasion, as the bill in question did not go to affect them in the least. In no instance, indeed, had any argument been urged to support the bill as it really stood. The framers of it, indeed, pretended that it was "A bill to explain, amend, and render more effectual the thirty-first of his Majesty;" but when examined it would rather appear to be "A bill to confound, deform, and render nugatory that act." The hon. gentleman next proceeded to show that, out of the seventeen convents that were now established in this country, only nine of them took in pupils. They were the only schools to which Roman catholic gentlemen could send their children to be educated, and was it not better that they should be educated there, under the eyes of their parents, and under the vigilant inspec-

tion of government, than in France, or any other foreign country, where their political as well as moral principles were supposed to run such risk of being corrupted? He was ready to confess that there was, in his opinion, a great deal of prejudice in the minds of many well-meaning persons in this country upon the subject; and that of supposing the catholic to be a worse religion than others to a state, in the present state of things, was only a political and moral falsehood. Upon the subject of the supposed operation of the funds of these monasteries being more than a match for the church of England, he said that appeared to him to be absolutely ridiculous. He said it should seem as if these poor catholics possessed all their former wealth and splendour, and that all their lands and goods had not been turned over with the cathedrals to our church—as if Harry the Eighth had never stripped them of anything, whereas he left them little but their vows to feed upon; nor have they had any other food, by the rules of law in this country, since the reformation: and therefore, to suppose that a few obscure nuns, living in a garret, could, by scattering their wealth in this country, eclipse our established church in splendour, and thereby become dangerous, appeared to him to be absolutely ridiculous. Indeed, it was much to be apprehended, that this bill had its origin in a mixture of other motives than those that were merely religious, or it might possibly arise out of a controversial spirit. This spirit had lately shown itself more particularly at Winchester, where the emigrants were not very popular, as, perhaps, it was natural for the people to be somewhat angry at seeing the king's castle there garrisoned only by French priests. Mr. Sheridan then mentioned the controversy that was now carried on between Dr. Sturges and Mr. Milner, on both of whom he bestowed the praise of erudition and abilities. Dr. Sturges, he was sure, did not want parliamentary assistance to aid him in refuting Mr. Milner's doctrines, though the latter, indeed, was rather a formidable antagonist. He next instanced the cruel treatment received by M. l'Abbé Fleury, in Hampshire, who had been torn from his home by an order from the secretary of state, though it was not yet known what crime had been laid to his charge, and the most respectable testimonies had been given to his character by gentlemen who had an opportunity of observing it for seven years. All these papers and documents he was ready to lay be-

fore the house ; and he hoped their justice and candour would not think it too much, that this evidence should be inquired into before the bill was farther proceeded on. It was merely his wish that a committee might be appointed to inspect them, and report whether they saw any necessity for the measure. Nothing, in his mind, could be more inauspicious than such a bill at this time, when we were about to receive into the country a number of representatives from Ireland, upon an idea of an union of interest as well as political show, an union with a country, three-fourths of whose inhabitants were catholics. He concluded with observing, that this bill was not worthy of being, as it were, the legacy of the last English parliament to its successors ; that it was hurtful to the feelings of the catholics, incompatible with our professions of liberality, not countenanced by the spirit of our constitution, the basis of which was freedom, and possibly introductory of great public mischief, as well as private vexation. Under 'these considerations he should end with a proposition—“ That this house do appoint a committee to inquire into the state of these religious houses, &c. and proceed no farther until it had some evidence upon the subject, upon which to deliberate ;” for which purpose he would move “ that this examination be adjourned to Monday next.”

For the speaker leaving the chair 52 ; against it 24.

JUNE 27.

OVERTURES FROM BUONAPARTE FOR PEACE.

MR. SHERIDAN said, sir, I rise in pursuance of the notice I had the honour of giving on Tuesday last, in order to state the grounds on which I rest my proposition, of the necessity of a call of the house on Monday fortnight. I am aware how very unpleasant and inconvenient a motion of this kind is at all times, unless there exist very strong grounds for it. When I mentioned my intention on Tuesday, of bringing forward such a motion, it was observed, that the intelligence recently arrived from France, and on which I founded the necessity, was nothing more than mere rumour. I might have been disposed to have admitted the justice of the objection ; but, sir, it is with the deepest regret I inform the house, that I now understand government has received the fullest and most authentic accounts of the truth,

in every particular, of that disastrous intelligence. I find that the events, which before existed only in rumour, have taken place, and that the alarming consequences of them appear in a much stronger light than by the first doubtful statement of them. It is not my intention to take advantage of the opportunity the subject affords me, by going much at large into general topics of argument and observation, referring to the impropriety and impolicy of carrying on the war with the republic of France, or of the necessity of an immediate peace and reconciliation with her present government; but I shall confine myself entirely to those topics which will enable me to bring before the house the simple question, whether the present circumstances of the country, and the relative situation in which it stands with regard to its allies, are not materially altered since we last discussed the subject, and so much so as to call upon the house to review the reasons on which it then decided? and also to inquire, whether it is fit and proper to separate, and enter upon a long recess, leaving the power of war and peace in the hands of his Majesty's present ministers, of ministers who have brought the country to its present situation, and whose hopes, promises, and predictions, with which they amused us, have failed in every instance—whether it becomes us to separate, without once more endeavouring to council his Majesty on this important, and, to us, all interesting subject? When last this question was discussed, we were instructed by the prophetic speech and warning voice of that great man, whose absence the house, in common with myself, must regret upon this occasion, as to the utter impracticability of subduing the French republic by force of arms. At that period, it was admitted, we were continuing the war for the purpose of restoring the house of Bourbon. Such was confessedly the object of ministers. In order to persuade the house to coincide with them, as to the expediency of pursuing the war in order to restore the French monarchy, and supporting his Majesty's ministers in refusing every kind of negotiation with Buonaparte, six reasons were adduced. Now I will put it to the plain understanding of every man of common sense, whether we have not had the fullest experience, that every one of those six grounds or reasons for continuing the war, and refusing to negotiate, have not wholly and completely failed? I ask, whether there is a single fragment of any one of them remaining? To

prove that there is not, I will recapitulate them in their order. The first reason was, that we ought to wait for a better and more perfect acquaintance with the character of Buonaparte, and for some proof of the stability of the government of which he was the head. Have we not been enabled to form a sufficient estimate of his character, and need we require any further proofs of the stability of his power? I think the house and the country may be satisfied on these points. The second reason was, the great, expensive, and persevering support that we should receive from our powerful and magnanimous ally, the Emperor of Russia; and even should his ardour in the cause relax, the assistance we were to expect from the Elector of Bavaria and the princes of the empire. We have had all the experience that was necessary, and it has proved to demonstration, that the hopes formed of assistance from those powers have altogether failed. The third reason offered was a treaty with the Emperor of Germany, by which it was to be stipulated, that neither Austria nor England were to lay down their arms but with the mutual consent of each other. Has any one heard of such a treaty having taken place? I know nothing of its having been concluded, nor indeed does the fact of the existence of such a treaty at all appear. The fourth and principal reason was to be found in the repossession of Italy by the emperor. The recent failure of his arms in that quarter has afforded us sufficient experience how premature were the hopes founded on that circumstance. The fifth reason was the increased spirit of the royalists in France. It was said, they were certain of finding allies in the discontents of the jacobins; that they were to persevere till the family of Bourbon was reseatd on the throne of France; and that the divided state of that country furnished a ground of hope that, with the assistance of this, we should see the object for which the war was commenced and carried on, completely accomplished. Has not experience shown how rash and fallacious such hopes were? has not the event proved that they were formed without the least knowledge of human nature, about which ministers have talked so much? The sixth and last ground was the reduced and disorganized state of the French army. It was stated that such was the situation of the military power of France, that it was physically impossible for them to bring such a strength into the field as could produce success, or anything like it. How just such

a conclusion was, the house, after the events of the present campaign, are enabled to determine. Thus, sir, I have stated the six grounds that induced the house, when the subject was last before it, to support his Majesty's ministers in refusing what I must call the moderate, respectful, and apparently sincere overtures of Buonaparte.

Finding that every one of these grounds has failed, surely, sir, I shall not be deemed a very unreasonable member of parliament, if I urge the house, before it consents to continue the war, to require at least six new reasons. The house will not, it cannot, carry on this war upon those six grounds ; which I have clearly proved, by showing that they have uniformly failed, must have been made by ministers divested of all penetration, knowledge of the resources of the enemy, and capacity to conduct the war with success, or make peace with honour. I can fancy but one reason that can possibly induce ministers to continue the war with France. It may be, sir, that after all the reasons they have alleged as the basis of that support which they received from the house ; after all their vain boasts of their own triumphs and success, and the defeat and despair of the enemy ; after all those hopes of the divisions in France having prepared the way for the restoration of its ancient government, hopes which they pledged themselves to realize ; after their unfounded, weak, and ridiculous assertions of the reduced and ruined state of the French army ; and, above all, after their violent and unqualified abuse of that great man, for so he must be called, who is at the head of the French republic ; I say, sir, after ministers have so unnecessarily and unadvisedly committed themselves, it is natural to suppose they would feel themselves in an awkward situation, if obliged to treat with the man who has been the object of their virulent and ill-timed abuse. I am sensible they would be placed in an awkward situation in treating with him at present. But shall their feelings be a ground for deferring the day of negotiation ? Their wounded pride may make them wish to continue a war, though they are forced to abandon the grounds and principles on which they have hitherto carried it on. Were I a political friend of theirs, I should say to them—" It is of much more consequence to stop the effusion of human blood, and heal the wounds of afflicted mankind, than to continue a war which desolates the earth, merely because your feelings would be hurt

by entering upon a treaty for peace." But, sir, ought the representatives of Great Britain to regard the pride or the feelings of his Majesty's ministers, when they cannot be gratified without dooming to misery and death, thousands of our own fellow-subjects, and thousands of our enemies? Sir, as to the character of Buonaparte, which, in my opinion, forms so prominent an ingredient in the present argument, though I should certainly not have referred to it, had it not been so much the subject of declamation on the other side of the house; with regard to his character and principles, I would put it to the candor of ministers themselves, if they possess any, as well as to the house, whether, since the period when they refused to negotiate with him, every action by which he has distinguished himself has not been eminently calculated to raise him in the good opinion of every man who judges without prejudice? That Buonaparte may justly be denominated an usurper, I admit; that he is a self-appointed dictator in France, I admit; but it must not be forgotten, that the situation of the country required the vigorous hand of such a dictator as he is. That Buonaparte possesses more power than is compatible with the liberties of France, I admit; but that he possesses more power than is necessary to protect the republic, and to enable it to resist those enemies that seek to destroy it, is what I will not admit. What has been the species of abuse with which his character has been attacked? Not merely that he is an hypocrite, that he is a man devoid of principle, that he is not only divested of morality, but religion, professing whatever mode of faith best answers his purpose; his enemies have not been content with these topics of censure, but his military skill and reputation have been the subject of their attack. It has been said, that the sailors on board our vessels before Acre laughed at his want of skill in war. But, sir, we have seen religion obtain a tolerant exemption in her favour under the government of this atheist; we have seen the faith of treaties observed under the government of this perfidious adventurer—the arts and sciences find protection under the government of this plunderer; the sufferings of humanity have been alleviated under this ferocious usurper; the arms of France have been led to victory by this tyro in the art and practice of war! Sir, I confess to you, I look back with astonishment to the period when that great general was so vilely libelled. I was wont to expect

more candour, more elevation of sentiment, in an English gentleman. But the war in which we are engaged, has deadened every heroic feeling which once gave the tone to the martial spirit of this abused country. Unfortunately for us, the French general has fully proved his title to heroic honours. Never since the days of Hannibal have such splendid events opened on the world with such decisive consequences. “*Cujus adolescentia ad scientiam rei militaris, non alienis præceptis, sed suis imperiis; non offensionibus belli, sed victoriis; non stipendiis, sed triumphis, est traducta.*” Such is the man who, even in his military character, we had been taught to consider with contempt! Such is the portrait of the man with whom his Majesty’s ministers have refused to treat. Sir, I should not have mentioned this, if government had not made his character a main question as to the continuance of the war; and if his Majesty’s ministers had not shown that our hopes of peace must depend upon their ideas concerning it. I do say that, considering the manner in which he has been treated by those ministers, he has acted with singular moderation, humanity, and magnanimity; and therefore we have the evidence of facts as to his principles, and that evidence removes the main ground of objection to treating with him. There are occasions when it may be necessary to do justice to the merits of an enemy, but it never can be necessary to speak of an enemy with rancour. I have stated, sir, that Buonaparte possesses much more power than is compatible with the liberty of France; but having always held the opinion that France ought to enjoy her liberty, and being persuaded that the death of that liberty would be effected by the combined powers forcing a government upon the people, I cannot but hope the time will arrive when France shall not only possess that portion of true liberty she ought to have, but that the government of this country will not consider its own security and the liberty of France inconsistent with each other. Sir, I may be censured for applying such a term as taste to a subject of such importance; but it does appear to me that the changes produced in the feelings of men, with respect to their admiration of exalted or distinguished characters, in a great measure are to be attributed to the taste and fashion that prevail. These are not times in which kings have any reason to be proud of their wealth or superior power. The admiration of mankind is not confined to the characters of kings

alone ; the world has had a lesson of the effects of their ambition. Buonaparte has shown his country that, his object is to maintain the power he has attained by the moderation of his government ; and I must hope, that when he has achieved the liberty of France, and his enemies have afforded him the opportunity of turning his attention to its internal regulations, he will, in giving it liberty, impart to it all the blessings and happiness of civilized peace. It must be in the recollection of the house, how much stress was laid on the conduct of this man with regard to the success of any negotiations for terminating the war. Has he not sufficiently developed his character, and given proofs of the security and permanence with which our government might conclude a treaty with him ? I believe, sir, it will not be denied for a moment, that the general voice is for peace, immediate peace, if possible ; the necessity of peace is felt throughout the country, both in this house and out of it. But I am sorry to say that there is a degree of careless indolence and supineness, that pervades all ranks of the people, which to my mind is the worst symptom of the declining liberty of a country. There is scarcely a man whom you meet, who has known the extent of the calamities of the present war, yet, in proportion to these calamities, has been a supporter of government in carrying it on, who has not received the news of the victories over the Austrians, our allies, with a smile ; they observe, that the victories of Buonaparte will lead to a peace. Look to the universal sentiment those victories have produced in the city : the funds have risen in consequence of them ; the people feel that it is to the defeat of our allies alone that they can look forward for an alleviation of their calamities. If the people have suffered by the continuation of the war, it is to themselves they must look as the cause of their sufferings. They feel the distresses of the war ; they will not say, “ We will have peace,” but are content to receive it as a boon from the enemy, through the disgrace of our allies. I know the people have only to meet in a constitutional way, and express their determination to have peace, in order to obtain it : but no, they wait till they receive it by the defeat and loss of honour of those with whom we are allied in the prosecution of the war. It is this supineness that I consider as a symptom of the decay of the spirit which once characterised the country.

There never was a period when there appeared so little public

virtue, so little independence of mind, as at present ; it is to rescue it from such apathy that I make this motion. Referring to what I professed at the outset of my observations, I shall not further occupy the attention of the house ; but conclude with the motion I proposed to make ; observing, at the same time, that no one can be more sensible of the unpopularity of such a motion than I am ; however, I do not know that there can be any objection to it. I put it to ministers, whether they ought not to give every member of this house an opportunity of attending the discussion of so important a question as that of peace or war, previous to the separation of parliament ? I shall now move, sir, “ That this house may be called over this day fortnight.”

Mr. Pitt having replied,

Mr. Sheridan said, I have little inclination, sir, to trouble the house with any further remarks. I trust every hon. gentleman must be convinced of the propriety of my motion, from what has been already said ; but there were some expressions which fell from the right hon. gentleman who had just sat down, which I think it my duty to observe upon. He says that I was intemperate in my language. It might be so ; but certainly he has by no means set me an example of moderation. I can safely say that I never saw even him lose his temper so much. His faculties seem to have been overwhelmed by his passions, for he communicated nearly as few ideas as if he had risen and beat a drum or sounded a trumpet. We had words in abundance, and fine-sounding words ; but argument we had none. He says that I enumerated the six reasons for carrying on the war without the necessary qualifications, and that I admitted the principal reason of all, viz. the deranged state of the French finances. Sir, I can safely declare that I am ignorant of the qualifications to which the right hon. gentleman alludes, and that I left out this mighty reason from my list because it was not mentioned by him and his friends when they maintained the propriety of persevering in the contest. They had frequently foretold the bankruptcy of France, and maintained that she was ready to sink into the gulf, and as often found their predictions erroneous and their assertions false. Afraid of again subjecting themselves to the charge of ignorance and temerity, or rather finding that the nation could no longer be duped by their stale tricks, they ab-

stained altogether from urging this argument against listening to the overtures of Buonaparte. The right hon. gentleman pleads in excuse for his conduct, that he never promised us success. He says, "We are good ministers, we have taken the most likely steps to promote the welfare of the country; but we have been disappointed, and things have turned out differently from what there was reason to expect." When I have shown that every ground on which he has built has failed, and all his reasonings and predictions were erroneous, what kind of language is it for a minister to talk of his promises? When he, whom he lately boasted of as being a magnanimous and affectionate ally, has abandoned our cause, and is on the brink of hostilities with us; when those troops which he said would do more than supply the place of the Russians, are almost all cut to pieces, and the dominions of their prince in the power of the enemy; when the French armies, which he represented as completely disorganized and incapable of being recruited, are triumphing in every direction, and presenting a most formidable aspect to the whole of Europe; when the Austrians, whose triumphs were so highly extolled, who were affirmed to be in a state to continue their victorious career, and who were said to be unanimous with ourselves, have lost the whole of Italy, tremble for their capital, refuse to enter into a treaty with us, and are probably at this moment treating with the French; when the royalists are all subdued and reconciled to the republican government, who, the right hon. gentleman assured us, were sufficient to restore royalty in France; when that character which was abused and vilified, and loaded with every epithet of reproach, has shone forth with unexampled splendour, and given proofs of almost every excellence; the right hon. gentleman comes down with a puny, sorry, childish, pitiful excuse, and says he made no promises. What! is he not to be blamed for having been deficient of intelligence; for having despised advice; for having acted without deliberation and foresight; for having persisted in a system unjustifiable, impolitic, and ruinous, because he did not promise us success? He stands convicted of complete inability or gross misrepresentation. If he really believed what he said, he is destitute of that penetration, sagacity, and soundness of judgment which are indispensably necessary to a minister. If he was conscious of the real state of affairs, and foresaw the events which were likely to

happen, and yet talked with confidence of victory, and obstinately persisted in the contest, no epithet of reproach and condemnation is too strong to be applied to him. Sir, I thought it my duty to move that the members of the house should be called together before the recess, that their opinions may be taken upon the present alarming posture of affairs. My motion has no other object; and no imputation can be more false than imputing to me a desire of dispiriting the country, or encouraging our enemies. I do not despond; and I would rather shed the last drop of my blood, than see my country dishonoured, or lose its independence. It would be unpardonable in any minister to dare to prorogue parliament at a conjuncture like the present, when every day may produce events interesting to the existence of the state. I hope that he will not think of proroguing parliament: I am astonished that he even objects to a call of the house. I have but a very few more words to address to you. I have proved that the six motives for carrying on the war with France have every one of them failed; and though the *onus probandi* lay upon the minister, he has not deigned to assign any new ones. Does it not then follow, that the war should be discontinued, or at least that a full attendance should be procured, that the propriety of discontinuing it may be canvassed? How great is the responsibility that ministers thus incur! If this system is continued, ruin must ensue. If I were to say that the French, having now a large body of troops at their disposal, might fit out an armament at Brest against our colonies, and send it to the West Indies, the right hon. gentleman would assure me that such a plan is impracticable, and that our possessions in every quarter of the globe are in a state of security. But after the fate of his predictions, would I, or would any one, give credit to them? Although he should, from his knowledge of human nature, declare it to be impossible, may we not, reflecting on the past, suppose that the Emperor of Russia may be influenced by the French, and declare war against his former allies? If he were to affirm that our commerce would continue to flourish, and our finances to be prosperous, would it be no answer to say, you have formerly been deceived? It is strange, indeed, to observe the manner in which these gentlemen apply experience to themselves and to others: they say that you should put trust in no one till you are thoroughly acquainted with him,

and that, if he has once acted improperly, he should never be trusted more. But they still claim confidence in themselves from all the world, although they have been repeatedly convicted of ignorance, incapacity, and presumption. I thought it my duty, sir, to bring forward this motion, and now I leave it to its fate.

Ayes 27 ; noes 124.

DECEMBER 1.

NEGOTIATION WITH FRANCE.

MR. SHERIDAN rose, and the clerk (at his request) having read that part of his Majesty's speech which refers to the late negotiations, spoke as follows :—Every one, sir, who heard this speech delivered from the throne, and every one who has read the papers which were laid before the house, must expect that we should take the subject into our solemn consideration, and state our opinion upon it to his Majesty in an humble address. This, sir, is a step which reason dictates, and it is strictly conformable to parliamentary usage. Whenever any communication of this nature has been made to the house, the invariable practice has been to canvas the conduct of ministers in the affair to which it refers, and to state the result of that inquiry to our sovereign. Ministers, however, seem to be of a different opinion ; and, for some reason or other, seem averse to all investigation of their conduct ; I, therefore, thinking it of the utmost importance to the public that it should be fully investigated, shall proceed to state the result of my most serious and mature consideration. That result, I trust, will meet the sentiments of the house, and the motion, which is founded on it, be agreed to. Instead of entering into the subject at large, as I once intended ; instead of pointing out with minuteness where ministers have been guilty of insincerity, where of prevarication, where of weakness, where of hypocrisy—I shall content myself with endeavouring to prove, from the past conduct of our allies and their present views, that we ought to disentangle ourselves from all continental connections as soon as possible ; and, by entering into a separate negotiation, conclude a separate peace ; in doing this I shall lay down two propositions, and establish upon these, two separate conclusions—the first is, that from the commencement

of the confederacy, there has existed, in the different states who composed it, a mercenary spirit, a sole view to private aggrandizement, the grossest and the most shameful insincerity. By these its object has been defeated; these now exist in their full force; and there is no prospect of its object being attained. It will hence follow, that it is our interest and our duty to withdraw from it, to avoid the obstacles which it throws in the way of peace, and no longer pledge ourselves to continue to make war till those states which are called our allies shall be completely exhausted. The next proposition I shall lay down and support is this, that there appears the strongest ground to suspect, that in all the negotiations for peace which ministers have carried on, although they may not have thwarted their plenipotentiaries, although there may have been conditions to which they would have acceded, still that they have never sincerely wished for peace, and never sincerely lamented the want of it. The inference arising from this is plain; since the same ministers remain in office, the interference of parliament is necessary; that alone can alter their intentions, counteract the mischiefs which their views are calculated to produce, or afford the least chance of salvation to the country.

I take upon me then to say, sir, that there is no one power with whom we have been in alliance, which has not deceived, defrauded, and deserted us. It is melancholy that, while I am speaking, additional arguments and new proofs should spring up to strengthen my position. Not only has an embargo been laid upon all British vessels by our late magnanimous ally, but it would seem that their captains have all been thrown into prison. I hope things will not turn out so ill as there is at present reason to apprehend; but, allowing that there have been great exaggerations, there cannot be a doubt that the boasted friendship of Russia is at an end, and that by our vaunted ally we are forsaken, betrayed, insulted, and outraged. For having said that the Emperor Paul was insincere, and not to be relied upon, a person was not long since fined and imprisoned; yet this same Emperor Paul has done a most unjustifiable act, which proves him undeserving of confidence. This embargo is not all; there is every reason to fear that almost every port in the Elbe is shut against us; that the King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick have interfered, and that, except by way of Meck-

lenberg, we can neither draw supplies of grain from the continent, nor send thither our manufactures. If these things are true, it is surely time for the house to consider whether this bar to negotiation should be allowed to continue, whether ministers should be allowed to keep possession of this pretext for carrying on the war. The right hon. gentleman lately allowed that our allies had treated us ill; he talked of the dereliction of some, and the perfidy of others; to some he ascribed unaccountable fickleness, and to others shameless atrocity. "But," said he, "who could have thought it? We were not endowed with a faculty of certainly foreseeing future events, and without that no one could have suspected what has happened." Sir, this is not the language of an enlightened statesman, or of an upright man. Did it require more than human prudence to foresee that Prussia, after the first ebullition of her resentment against the French revolution, would soon perceive that it was not her interest to waste her blood and her treasure for the aggrandizement of Austria; and that the best way to extinguish jacobinism, and to check the spirit of innovation, was to attend to internal regulations, to promote industry, to secure plenty, and to alleviate the public burthens? Did it require any great sagacity to foresee that Spain, unable to withstand the shock of republican arms, would, to save herself from ruin, consent to any terms of accommodation? Could it not be suspected that the emperor would prefer his own interest to that of Great Britain, and that he would not pay a very scrupulous regard to any engagements which ought to have prevented him from giving this preference? Has it only been discovered of late years, that the petty states of Germany must all act in concert, either with the Emperor or the King of Prussia? Was it a thing very improbable that, when magnanimous Paul saw all his allies fighting to promote their own interest, and when he discovered that he himself could gain nothing in the contest, his magnanimity should abate, his ardour for martial glory should cool, and that he should abandon the cause of morality, religion, and social order? But, sir, they should surely have been better able to appreciate the operation of this mercenary spirit, since it first animated their own bosoms, and they infused it into the confederacy. On what principles and pretences did they enter into the war? We are severely censured for ascribing various motives to them, and

different ones to-day from what we mentioned a few days before. But the fault is theirs; they change their language with every change of circumstances, and make their inducements for performing past actions to depend upon what happens years after they were performed. I cannot forget that it was once said, "we had gone to war because France would not allow us to remain at peace." This assertion is again repeated in Lord Grenville's letter; and it is there positively asserted; that our only reason for going to war was the unprovoked aggression of France. No sooner was this language held at home, than another ground of warfare was stated to the rest of Europe. The enormities of the French were painted in glowing colours; the dangerous nature of their designs was laid open; the overthrow of all regular governments was represented as inevitable if they should succeed; their private proceedings were represented as a sufficient reason for attempting to subdue them; neutrality was denounced as impolicy, as pusillanimity, as treason against the human race. We declared to Tuscany, we declared to Sardinia, we declared to Switzerland, that they need not wait for aggression, that all had already received sufficient provocation, who had any regard for domestic happiness, for social comforts, or the consolations of religion. Was there not here the grossest hypocrisy and the most shameful double-dealing? Must not our allies have been disgusted or corrupted by our bad example? After all these protestations of respect for the rights of humanity—after all these sentiments of abhorrence for the regicide republic, ministers were the first who neglected the professed object of the war, and who consulted individual gain. While they were calling upon all to join in a contest such as never appeared before—while they were maintaining that, to bring the awful and unprecedented struggle to a happy termination, they thought they must have an indemnity for their trouble—they fitted out an expedition, and stole the West India islands. This was the way in which we were to destroy usurpation, and to set an awful example of the punishment which awaits disloyalty and irreligion. In two right hon. gentlemen opposite to me, I think I see the true reasons for carrying on the war personified, and their union is equally compatible. The one (Mr. Pitt) says, "I will admit that the principle of the war is to suppress jacobinism and destroy its leaders, if I am not required

to act upon it. I will admit that our only object is to establish the throne and the altar, provided I am allowed to carry on my plans of aggrandizement." This is the reason why our exertions have been so ill directed, and why the means employed have been so inadequate to the end proposed.

From that moment all dignity forsook us ; and the variance between our professions and our practice was by turns the subject of laughter, of censure, and of reprobation to our allies. We were entitled to salvage for the civilized world, a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) I heard once say—"but it would have been time enough to be paid when the work was accomplished—*when the job was done.*" He first insists upon salvage, and then sets out in pursuit of the vessel. Our example, sir, had the most deplorable effects. It infused a spirit of insincerity, and a desire of aggrandizement among all the confederates, and they have ever since assisted each other as long only, and to as great an extent, as they thought would be productive of their own individual advantage. Prussia soon after deserted us, in a manner which I need not recal. The emperor's whole attention was turned to the acquisition of a barrier, in place of the one which Joseph had destroyed ; and his only object was to get possession of Valenciennes, Quesnoy, and the other fortresses of French Flanders. The fall of Dunkirk was anxiously expected, that it might be delivered up to Great Britain. This has been attempted to be denied ; but it can be denied with no shadow of reason. Thus, though we did not absolutely break faith with our allies, we introduced the principle which led others to do so ; and we have no reason whatever to reproach their misconduct.

To apply what I have said to Russia. I never was a friend to magnanimous Paul, and am less so now than ever. But I must "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." His mother, the Empress Catherine, was very liberal of proclamations and promises ; but her magnanimous son declared he would not sheath the sword till he had restored the house of Bourbon. He, in fact, sent numerous armies into the field, and was prepared to make still greater exertions ; but he soon discovered that his allies were not equally magnanimous with himself ; that private interest was their only guide ; and that, whilst his forces were cut in pieces, and his resources expended, he merely saw those made more powerful who might one day become his ene-

mies. He took upon himself the title of Grand Master of Malta (to be sure a most ridiculous step in every point of view, particularly as he is a member of the Greek church), but not an inch of the island does he possess. Over this subject there hangs a considerable degree of mystery, which I should like to see developed. There are several circumstances which look as if, though no absolute promise of the island was made to Paul, some hopes had been held out to him, or at least he was allowed, without being undeceived, to cherish sanguine hopes of being presented with it. It is not long since a fleet, with troops on board, sailed from this country, for the express purpose of taking possession of the place when it should surrender, and to ensure its good government. No remonstrances were made when he assumed the title; and, when he pretended to make Captain Home Popham a knight of that order, his power to do so was recognised in the *London Gazette*. There are, I think, strong reasons to suspect that his magnanimous mind was led to believe he would receive this as a reward for his exertions in this magnanimous scramble.

It is strange, sir, that not a man on the continent could be found who would take a part in a cause of such a nature without being subsidized. We have been obliged to bribe them to do their duty, to protect their property, and to defend their religion. We have been obliged to be the recruiting-serjeants and paymasters-general to Europe. The right hon. gentleman won't be pleased, perhaps, if I find fault with the Emperor of Germany. He will allow me to abuse the Spaniards, to complain of the versatility of Paul, and to apply the epithets of perfidious and dishonourable to the King of Prussia. (Mr. Pitt seemed to dissent.) Perhaps, the right hon. gentleman has thoughts of forming an alliance with that sovereign, by means of a handsome subsidy, to make up for his northern neighbour. I am at a loss to conceive on what other account he can dislike to hear his name mentioned with disrespect. But, to proceed to his imperial and royal Majesty. It may appear odd in me to use such liberties with crowned heads; but it should be recollected, that when we speak of kings and emperors, we mean only to speak of their ministers. Sovereigns are all immaculate and infallible, and their bad counsels are alone to be attributed to those who surround them. Still it is an ungracious task to expose the conduct of

the cabinet of Vienna ; but at the call of duty I do not hesitate to perform it. I set out then by declaring, in the most positive and unequivocal manner, that the Emperor of Germany has failed in his engagements with us more than any ally that it has been our misfortune to be burthened with, and that he is not now performing the contract which he lately subscribed. Ought I not then to say what I feel, and to endeavour to impress it upon the house ? On one occasion he completely broke his faith : he entered into the preliminaries of Leoben, and signed the peace of Campo Formio, when he had promised not to treat but in conjunction with us. I need not be told that he was compelled to do so ; all that I say is, that he once broke his engagements, and that what once happened may happen again. (Mr. Pitt was here observed to whisper to several of those sitting around him.) It would be really much better, sir, if the right hon. gentleman would answer me himself, than now interrupt me by telling others how I may be answered. But I do not urge so strongly against him his conduct on that occasion, as the manner in which he behaved when, after the breaking off of the negotiations at Rastadt, he again took the field. The right hon. gentleman having then concluded a treaty with Russia, although the Emperor of Germany refused to come under any engagements, boasted of the triple alliance, and maintained that France could not possibly withstand its efforts. He continued to hold this language after he must have known that Paul I. was disgusted, and about to withdraw his forces. When that event at last took place, as every one had long foreseen, he applied in the most urgent manner to the Emperor of Germany ; and, if he would enter into a new treaty with him, offered him his own terms. The emperor was then undisputed master of Italy, and victory crowned his arms ; he turned a deaf ear to all these solicitations. Would he have hesitated a moment had he been zealous in the common cause, or had taken the smallest interest in it ? He wished to carry on unmolested his own nefarious schemes, by overturning independent states to enlarge his dominions ; and to be able to make peace as soon as he had acquired enough to satisfy his ambition ; he, therefore, kept aloof from the treasure which was temptingly held out to his view. On the 13th of February a message was brought down from his Majesty, in which our Russian alliance, the advantages of which had been

stated to be inconceivable, was talked of in the highest manner. It was said that Bavaria, and other German states, were about to bring immense armies into the field, and that a treaty was forming with the Emperor of Germany. Now, sir, his Majesty does not state that he will propose an alliance with the emperor, but that he is actually treating with him. The emperor was still prosperous, and our two millions were despised. At length, on the 20th of June—when the battle of Marengo, which made such a melancholy reverse in his history, had been fought on the 14th, when he found that Melas had been obliged to yield up the greatest part of Italy, and that Moreau, having gained three great pitched battles, was advancing rapidly to Vienna, being in the extremity of distress, and utterly unable, however well inclined, to promote the common cause—he pledges himself to assist us to the utmost, and unless in conjunction with us, not to treat with the enemy. There is something extremely injurious in the alliance itself, which ought to be pointed out and exposed. On the 20th of June it is agreed that his Majesty, the emperor and king, shall have £2,000,000 of money, to be paid at three instalments, in July, September, and December. For this, what was to be done? He was to carry on the campaign with all possible vigour, and not to treat except in conjunction with his Britannic Majesty. But it has likewise a retrospective operation, and was to take effect from the beginning of March last. He thus pledges his imperial word that he *will* exert every effort to annoy the enemy for four months which are gone, and that for the same period of past time, he *will* not make a separate peace with the French republic. He received the first instalment, for carrying on in Italy his schemes of foul ambition and unprincipled aggrandisement; the next, for making an armistice. This was using all his means! this was struggling, as he promised, to the last gasp! But he wishes to make amends; when the armistice is near expiring, he leaves his capital, he springs from the couch of ease, he repairs to the field, he is confident that he will be able to re-establish his affairs. Who would not second such an heroic prince? Every subject in his dominions must flock to his standard. But no sooner had he arrived at the army with these magnanimous views, than his courage failed him, and he was seized with a most magnanimous panic. There are some things which one would think might as well be done by

proxy, and some prerogatives of sovereignty which it must be pleasant for the sovereign to exercise by delegation. But it would seem, on the other hand, that there are degrees in all things—in power, in aggrandisement, in humility, in meanness; and that he who has one in a super-eminent degree, is apt to give proof of all the rest. Francis, therefore, would not allow another to act now in his place; but, by signing, with his own hand, the convention of Hohenlinden, gave proof of the most super-imperial pusillanimity.

The next question is, whether he has since been faithful to his engagements. The right hon. gentleman says, “he never has had the slightest idea of entering into a separate negotiation with France, though to be sure it has been impossible for him openly to carry on the war.” I must use the liberty to say, that that is impossible. I make no doubt that ministers have been told so; but they have not been told the truth. I cannot but regret that the fourteen documents which I moved for on a former night were not laid before the house; and I must say, that ministers assigned no sufficient reason for refusing to produce them. It was said, that Count St. Julien had no credentials. I perceive it is asserted in one of M. Otto’s notes, that he carried with him a letter from the emperor to the chief consul, and this assertion has never been contradicted. I may be told, that this could convey no power to an ambassador; as a sovereign, not responsible himself, must act by those who are. This is, no doubt, a maxim of our constitution; but in despotic forms of government it is different; and absolute kings not unfrequently conclude treaties, and do other diplomatic acts, without the intervention of any one. The preliminaries, no doubt, required to be ratified; but neither was our treaty with the emperor conclusive till it had been ratified; yet no one would, on that account, maintain that Lord Minto was completely unauthorized to sign it. Lord Grenville says, “he never heard of these pretended negotiations till they were mentioned by M. Otto.” Why not then produce the emperor’s disavowal of St. Julien’s proceedings, and clear up the mystery at once? “Take my word for it,” says the minister, “to produce the paper is unnecessary.” When documents which might be made public are kept back, I must suspect the account which is given of their contents. The note of the Count de Thugut to M. Talleyrand

evidently does not contain a new proposal, but is an answer to a proposal already made. The letter states that plenipotentiaries had been appointed, and rejoices that Great Britain was to take a part in the negotiations. If there is sense in words, and if the writer of this note understood the use of language, proposals for a separate treaty had before been made and accepted. It is as clear as day, that negotiations had been actually begun. Lord Minto thanks the Austrian ministers for their obliging communications. Is this the language of one who thinks that separate overtures cannot possibly be entertained? From the two circumstances, of the mission of St. Julien, and the expressions in Thugut's and Lord Minto's letters, I have not a doubt that the emperor has deceived our ministers; that he has been treating with Buonaparte for a separate peace; and that he has once more been guilty of a gross breach of faith towards his ally.

I shall now endeavour to prove, that ministers never, at any period since the beginning of the war, have sincerely wished for peace; and that as often as they have made an attempt to promote peace, they have rejoiced at its failure. Need I mention more than their conduct to the emperor? When they urged him to make a common cause with England, after it was impossible for him to be of the least service to us, can it be doubted that their object was, that they might have a ready excuse for refusing to negotiate? After the negotiation at Paris, his Majesty declared in the most solemn manner, that he would omit no opportunity of putting an end to the destructive contest, and that he would willingly grant the conditions which he had before offered. After the breaking off of the negotiation at Lisle, known by the name of the *sincere treaty*, the same language was put into his Majesty's mouth; and, on the 28th of October, it was declared, that the offers which had been rejected, would at any future period cheerfully be made. The right hon. gentleman, I know, is always sore about this *sincere treaty*, and does not like to hear it mentioned. But he really need not be so uneasy; I impute nothing to him of insincerity or bad faith. There is a great difference between saying that you will grant the enemy certain conditions of peace, and anxiously wishing them to be acceded to; and there is an inconsistency between offering them sincerely, and rejoicing heartily that they are rejected. A person in the country who has quarrelled with one of his neigh-

bourhood about the inclosing of a common or the making of a highway, rather than go to law, and thus incur the odium of all his neighbours, will perhaps desire his attorney to settle the dispute upon certain conditions. These conditions he would no doubt soon afterwards fulfil ; but nevertheless he may wish them to be rejected, and exult if they are, for then he will have public opinion on his side, and will have better chance to have the common divided, or the road turned as he wished it. Ministers, sir, did not try to conceal their exultation. They publicly thanked Providence for the dangers they had escaped. It was rather a strange feeling to return thanks to Heaven that all hopes of returning tranquillity had vanished, and that thousands were about to be slaughtered. Sir, the result may be reckoned a punishment for such a presumption, and ought to be an awful warning against such a display of insensibility, and such a mockery of religion.

His Majesty had been made to say, that whatever the government was which prevailed in France, he would be ready to treat with it. How was this promise kept? An offer came from Buonaparte of the most moderate kind. They had treated with jacobins and regicides ; yet it was contemptuously rejected. They did not say they would not engage in any but a joint negotiation ; they urged none of their old pretences, but they took new ground, and boldly demanded experience and the evidence of facts of the good dispositions of the government, and insisted upon the restoration of the Bourbons. Here the true cause of the war broke out, and fiction was for a time laid aside. It was allowed that Buonaparte was sincere. He was descried in every figure of speech, and every epithet of abuse was applied to him. He was called cruel, profligate, unprincipled, atheistical, an adventurer, an usurper, a renegado, the child and champion of jacobinism ; but when it was asked whether he was inclined to peace, it was answered, “ Yes ; most sincerely. Peace is necessary to him ; but should we allow him to obtain it, and thus to establish his power ? Should we prolong the reign of this unprincipled adventurer, of this cruel usurper, of this atheistical renegado ? should we confer a favour upon jacobinism, by conferring a favour upon its child and its champion ? ”

I now come to show that the events of the last negotiation support my position with equal strength. They could no longer

assign, as a pretence for their warlike disposition, the instability of the power of Buonaparte; they could not venture to revile his character; they durst not say he was void of moderation, and an enemy to tranquillity and social order. "If he again proposes peace to us," thought they, "we are undone. We are at present without a shield from censure; our real dispositions must be made public; we are without means to mislead the people. Could we only form an alliance with a foreign court, then the faith of treaties would come in to our assistance." The emperor was reduced to difficulties, and, in the hour of distress, they directed their ambassador to offer him two millions of money if he would allow us to promise that we would not enter into any treaty for peace without him, and he would, for form's sake, make a corresponding promise to us in return. This money was squandered not to promote a British object. It was morally impossible that he could lend us the least assistance; yet he would clog any future negotiation, by rendering it necessary for him to be a party to it. Are there two ends which could be served by this step? Does it not warrant me to conclude that they would reckon a successful treaty a most lamentable event? I impute no bad motive to them; but merely assert, that they have a firm conviction that peace with the French republic is most undesirable, and that every nerve should be strained to widen the breach between the two countries, to inflame the national prejudices of each of them, and, while a guinea remains in the country, to persevere in the desperate struggle.

I shall be told, perhaps, that there is a part of the negotiations to which I have not alluded, and which proves that ministers were willing to make any sacrifice to put an end to the horrors of war. Sir, I give ministers no credit for this part of their conduct. I condemn them, for even once entertaining an overture for a maritime truce—a maritime truce every Englishman must have abhorred. There was nothing too exorbitant for the French to ask as a compensation for suspending hostilities on the continent; but no consideration for our ally, no hope of advantage to be derived from joint negotiation, should have induced the English government to think for a moment of interrupting the course of our naval triumphs. This measure, sir, would have broken the heart of the navy, and would have damped all its future exertions. How would our gallant sailors have felt, when,

chained to their decks like galley slaves, they saw the enemy's vessels sailing under their bows in security, and proceeding, without a possibility of being molested, to revictual those places which had been so long blockaded by their astonishing skill, perseverance and valour? We never stood more in need of their services, and their feelings at no time deserved to be more studiously consulted. The north of Europe presents to England a most awful and threatening aspect. Without giving an opinion as to the origin of these hostile dispositions, or pronouncing decidedly whether they are wholly unfounded, I hesitate not to say, that if they have been excited because we have insisted upon enforcing the old and established maritime law of Europe, because we stood boldly forth in defence of indisputable privileges, because we have refused to abandon the source of our prosperity, the pledge of our security, and the foundation of our naval greatness, they ought to be disregarded or set at defiance. If we are threatened to be deprived of that which is the charter of our existence, which has procured us the commerce of the world, and been the means of spreading our glory over every land; if the rights and honours of our flag are to be called in question, every risk should be run, and every danger braved. Then we should have a legitimate cause of war—then the heart of every Briton would burn with indignation, and his hand be stretched forth in defence of his country. If our flag is to be insulted, let us nail it to the topmast of the nation; there let it fly while we shed the last drop of our blood in protecting it, and let it be degraded only when the nation itself is overwhelmed.

I come now, sir, to that part of the correspondence which relates to Egypt. This is the strongest charge against his Majesty's ministers: it is of the more importance, because it is not to be endured that imputations should be thrown, in this house, upon officers employed in the service of their country abroad. One of the greatest recompenses that can be bestowed upon an officer is the thanks of this house. Let us take care, then, lest, by suffering insinuations to be thrown out against them, we at last tend to lessen the value of those thanks. I say that that gallant officer, Sir Sidney Smith, had power to treat. Ministers say no. I demand, then, the production of the instructions to him. "No," reply his majesty's ministers, "take our words." I contend, that Sir Sidney Smith was sent out, that he had a distinct

station, and that he could not have received any instructions from Lord Keith in less than two months. I say also that he had powers to negotiate the evacuation of Egypt almost upon any terms. A proclamation was published at Constantinople and carried into Egypt; it was at the close of January, 1799. In the gallant and noble defence of Acre, Sir Sidney Smith distributed this proclamation to the people; and what did it contain? Sir Sidney, authorised by government, promises safe conduct and passports to all the French who will leave the army and embark for France. At this time, then, his Majesty's ministers must have been apprised that Sir Sidney thought himself authorised to act. Did they send out word that he was not so authorised? But then comes a parcel of correspondence seized about that time; how garbled I know not. You find a desponding account of the French army, but nothing of the grand vizier's. Notice is sent to General Kleber that the convention is not to be respected. The general immediately renews hostilities, and with a slaughter so immense as scarcely to be credited. The effect of this measure, I fear, is, that you have lost Egypt for ever. Surely ministers ought to have known that nothing but the convention of El Arish saved Egypt. Surely they ought to have known, that of 200,000 of whom the grand vizier's army consisted, 100,000 had deserted; that the levies, raised as usual only for six months, were raw, and could not be disciplined; that the grand vizier was left with a miserable remnant; that Ghezzar Pacha had risen in his rear; and that his destruction must have been inevitable, but for the masterly manner in which Sir Sidney Smith managed his handful of sailors, and but for the consummate policy and abilities with which he acted with respect to the convention of El Arish. The chief consul says, "the good genius of France has saved Egypt to the French." Sir, the good genius of France has frequently been made up of the improvidence and want of skill of his Majesty's ministers. They ought to have known that the grand vizier's army was in this wretched state, and that Passwan Oglou harassed and distracted the attention of the Porte with a powerful and triumphant force. But whether they knew these things or not, I ask, on what principles did they act towards Turkey their ally? They say to the French you shall not escape unless you consent to lay down your arms. They say so to an enemy in an ally's country, that ally

having already entered into a negotiation, by which the enemy are to evacuate the country. Now, sir, we who talk of the conduct of the French, what do we say to this? Suppose a party of French had landed in Ireland, and that we had some Russian officers in our service in that kingdom, we agree with the French that they shall evacuate it. "No," say the Russians, "they shall stay where they are; they shall not go till they have laid down their arms." Would not the right hon. gentleman reprobate such conduct in his loftiest strain? Sir, I will not press this subject farther; but I do hope and trust that it will again be taken up separately and seriously.

I recur now to the correspondence; and I do it in order to show how hastily some gentlemen give credit to his Majesty's ministers, when they tell us that Count St. Julien had no authority to treat, and that Sir Sidney Smith had none. Let gentlemen advert to this circumstance—let me ask them whether any trust is to be given to that letter in the correspondence which speaks of the letter of General Kleber, and which characterises it as containing an engagement to execute the convention of El Arish as soon as the king's acquiescence in it should be made known to him? Let gentlemen refer to the letter itself.

Sir, I cannot but think I see, through the whole of the correspondence, the preparation for a rupture; I see Captain George appointed, because the attention of the public shall not be drawn to the communications with M. Otto. This stiff-necked policy shows insincerity. I see Mr. Nepean and Mr. Hammond also appointed to confer with M. Otto, because they are of the same rank. Is not this as absurd as if Lord Whitworth were to be sent to Petersburg, and told that he was not to treat but with some gentleman of six feet high, and as handsome as himself? Sir, I repeat that this is a stiff-necked policy, when the lives of thousands are at stake. Ministers seem to have an excellent knack at putting papers together; they have given us before pictures of pikes and profiles of spears; and, until we sift and compare things, many of us might be led to suppose that they were seriously desirous of peace. Lord Grenville says, "If the situation of the French army in that country were to become matter of discussion between the two governments, his Majesty and his allies have a right, on every principle of good faith, as practised between civilized nations, to require that the French

should evacuate Egypt on the terms stipulated in the convention of Arish, those stipulations having been ratified both by the Turkish government and by the French commanding officer, and his Majesty having also instructed his admiral commanding in those seas to accede to them as soon as they were known here. This demand would be made with the more reason, because, even subsequent to the recommencement of hostilities in Egypt (under circumstances to which his Majesty forbears to advert), an official engagement was entered into by General Kleber in his letter to the kaimakan, dated the 10th April, 1800, by which that general, then commanding in chief the French army in Egypt, and, consequently, possessing full powers to bind his government in this respect, formally undertook that the convention of El Arish should be executed so soon as the king's acquiescence in it should be notified to him." What does General Kleber say? "The Sublime Porte will still find me disposed to deliver up to him the possession of Egypt upon the conditions stipulated at El Arish, with the exception of some modifications which the existing circumstances have rendered necessary. Thus all motive for a fresh effusion of blood would be obviated, and a regular negotiation (the effect of which would no longer be prevented by unforeseen orders) would restore to the Ottoman Empire those provinces of which it would be in vain to attempt to deprive us by force of arms. If your excellency shares these sentiments of peace and concord, you will communicate them to his Majesty the Emperor Selim the Second; and, without doubt, you will obtain orders to resume, without delay, those conferences which would conduct us to the object which we are equally desirous of attaining."

It thus appears that General Kleber calls for a new negotiation, and desires to have fresh conferences. There is not a word in the letter which states he will evacuate Egypt as soon as the king's acquiescence is known. A right hon. gentleman attempted, the other day, to attach some importance to the letter of an aide-de-camp, who was at Jaffa. Where is the letter? (D in the Appendix to the Correspondence.) I always suspect something from these gentlemen with respect to papers. Does Lord Grenville say anything of this letter? No; he only refers to General Kleber's. Sir, I dwell the more upon this, in order to show that we are not to take it for granted that the cha-

racter of the documents referred to in the correspondence is a true one. I have proved that the character given of General Kleber's letter is in no part correct; and I contend I have a right to assume that the description of other papers is as little correct. Sir, I honestly confess that I do not believe anything would have induced the secretary at war to have put his name to such a quibble.

The object of the motion which it is my intention to submit, is, to afford one step more towards negotiation, and remove those impediments which our connection with the Emperor of Germany has thrown in the way of it. With respect to the war itself, I do think it to have been a most unsuccessful, and (to ministers) a most disgraceful one. God forbid that any man should, as some persons hinted the other night, attack the exploits of our navy! they have been most glorious and splendid; but when you talk of a successful war, you must mean one that has accomplished the objects for which it was undertaken. Have you deterred other countries from aggrandizement and rapine? Have you restored the Bourbons? No; but you have taken Trincomalee. Have you re-established the *noblesse* of France? No; but you have taken Ceylon. Have you restored the orders of France? No; but you have taken the Cape. But will you tell me, that if you place these in one scale, and the two hundred and seventy millions of debt in the other, the latter will not overbalance your successes? But this is not the fair way. You must calculate what you will keep; you must calculate the seventeen millions imposed by the war; you must calculate their effect upon the industry and impatience of the country. Will any man tell me that we should have consented to have made the purchase at such a price, even without the loss of a single life? No, sir, no. This, then, I contend, is an unsuccessful war. But, it is said, "we have annihilated the navy of the enemy." Let us recollect, however, the time when it was said "that nothing could compensate for leaving Holland in the power of France, for suffering her to possess the Netherlands, and for permitting her to have such a long line of coast, from the Texel almost to the Adriatic." You may, it is true, leave the enemy crippled, but you leave them with the power of raising themselves to as great a naval height as they ever were in possession of before.

But it is said “ we have preserved our constitution.” How have we preserved it? So careful have ministers been of its preservation, that they are afraid to give us the *use* of it. They have considered it as some choice thing which ought to be put out of sight, and carefully locked up. I hope, sir, the constitution is only suspended, and that we shall yet see it in all its splendour; but, till that time comes, I can give no one any credit for his attentions to it. Sir, *peace must be concluded*, or it must be proved that the period of fraud, prevarication, and insincerity is over, and that a new system of things is about to commence. If I am asked “ whether I expect that ministers will ever make peace with sincerity?” I answer “ No!” In some circumstances I can conceive that they may conclude a peace which might be preferable to this destructive war; and I believe that they will, ere long, be compelled to conclude one of some kind or other. But that they will ever be authors of a peace which will heal the wounds the war has inflicted, which will soothe national animosity, which will justify a reduction of our forces, which will render it possible to lighten the oppressive load of taxes—that they will make a peace of conciliation, I confess that I have no hope. I do not say that there is but one man in the kingdom capable of making a solid peace. God forbid! I believe that there are many. But I do not scruple to say that a solid peace can be concluded only upon the principles of that one man. Who that man is, it is needless for me to mention, and his principles are equally well known. All right to interfere with the internal concerns of other nations must be disclaimed; and, for commanding due respect to the constitution, we must trust to the good sense and loyalty of the people, and disdain the idea that jacobinism can make any impression upon England. That such a peace may produce the blessings and benefits which peace is calculated to confer, the rights of the people must be attended to—the constitution must be restored. Without national liberty, national happiness can neither be great in its degree, extensive in its sphere, or long in its duration. Those bonds which now slavishly bind down the inhabitants of this country, which break the spirit of the people, which render impossible the expression of the public voice, must all be completely removed. Till then, while war continues, our sufferings must be aggravated, and they will be but slightly alleviated even by the arrival of peace.

Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving, “ That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, humbly to assure him that we have taken into our most serious consideration the papers relative to the negotiation for peace with France, and that the result of our reflections on this important subject, founded as well on due examination of the documents now referred to us, as on experience of the past conduct of most of his Majesty’s allies, is an humble, but earnest desire, that his Majesty will omit no proper opportunity which may arise, consistently with the good faith ever preserved on the part of his Majesty, of entering into a separate negotiation with the government of France for a speedy and honourable peace; and farther to implore his Majesty not to sanction any new engagements which shall preclude such a mode of negotiation.”

For the motion 35 ; against it 156.

MAY 14, 1802.

DEFINITIVE TREATY.

MR. SHERIDAN said, sir, at this late hour, (about two o’clock), it is with extreme reluctance I rise to address the house, and to trespass upon your time and patience. I shall not be singular to-night in the professions I make you of avoiding details: but, sir, in one respect my conduct will differ from that of any other gentleman who has addressed you. I will *keep my word*. If I feel repugnance to rise at so late an hour, I feel equally strange with respect to the unpopularity which I fear I must experience. It is natural to every person to have pleasure in voting in a majority, though to that pleasure, I believe, I have long been a stranger. Among the strange things we are continually witnessing, is the strange division of parties at present in this house. Sir, I have heard it said, that there are about twelve or thirteen different parties among us; nay, some carry the number much farther. Now I scarcely expect a single vote with me beyond that little circle of a constitutional party, who have for the last ten years been the objects of so much unqualified abuse; but those men who have so often been held up to public opprobrium, are the very same men whose every prediction has been fulfilled, and every fear realized. The discussion of this necessary, but disgraceful treaty of peace to-night, is a confirmation of the propriety of their political conduct during

the whole course of the war. My friends must feel poignant shame and deep humiliation at the situation to which, by these terms, this country is reduced, but which they have laboured steadily to avert. Those who oppose this peace have been arraigned by the last speaker, as aiming at a censure on the issue of the negotiations, and on the ministers themselves. And certainly, sir, their object is to condemn the peace, and to cast a slur on the abilities of his Majesty's ministers. But, in this conduct of theirs, they have at least the merit of being consistent. I support the peace, because I feel confident no better terms, considering all circumstances, could be got. Their predecessors had taken care of that. They had left them no choice, but between an expensive, bloody, and fruitless war, and a perilous and hollow peace. They have chosen the best of the alternatives. "Now," says the minister, "they who oppose me, depress the country." I thank these *new* oppositionists for their manly firmness in coming forward and opposing, upon their own principles, this degrading treaty. Let the people of this country be fully aware of all the circumstances of the peace. *They* have done their duty, then, in thus publicly discussing them. But a right hon. gentleman—not here this evening—an ex-minister too, suspects something more. If he has not altered his opinion since the preceding day, he suspects their motives. "They," says he, "disapproved the treaty, and attack administration, because they wish to drive out ministers, and succeed to their places, and for that purpose they have formed a confederacy." Truly, sir, a heavy charge! But I must declare, that they have never veiled their opinions. Some of them especially, have been at all times very open, and I conceive that it would be high injustice to suspect them, upon slight grounds, of a dirty cabal to turn out the present ministers. Says the right hon. gentleman, "upon their principles, they would never have made peace." "Why so?" we have always said. It is now, therefore, confirmed, that a leading part of the late ministry acted upon such principles. But the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) the preceding day denounced their foul ambition, and their design to *trip* up the *heels* of their *successors*! Another great discovery is now made: these persons' principles were such as rendered a peace *impossible*, and yet the very men who say so, have just been *thanking* them *all*, as the *saviours* of the country!!! Can the right hon.

gentleman account for this inconsistency? I should think not; and yet he looks so confidently, I almost think he could. He thought I was cheering him, as if I did not suppose him a constant supporter of the war, and he assures the house "he was a steady friend to it!" But he has now found out that it was necessary to stop. Pray, why not have stopped a little sooner? Why not before you were so much exhausted? For instance, when Buonaparte made you an offer? Now, however, he finds the necessity of peace. But is this such a peace as will give us real repose? Consider your debt and taxes, and the necessity which seems to be at length coming upon us of keeping up a peace establishment unknown in this country. It is lamentable to see *you all* split into *miserable parties*, when your *great enemy* is uniting every possible means of extending his power! You are squabbling about the measuring of ribands and tapes, and the paltry revenues of Malta, when much greater objects are before you! The events of every day seem to call more and more for the expression of that public feeling, that the time will come when French encroachments and oppression must cease, and when the voice of this country must be clearly raised against their atrocious and tyrannical conduct! The right hon. gentleman says, "we have preserved our *honour*!" Honour depends more on the manner of doing a thing than on the thing itself. We had a great armament at the time of negotiation, but I don't hear that it carried any point whatever! "This," says he, "is a peace in which we relinquish nothing, and gain much!" Will any man of common sense undertake to prove that? I defy him to name the single *object*, ever varying, ever shifting, unrelinquished. What did we go to war for? Why, to prevent French *aggrandizement*. Have we done that? No. Then we were to rescue Holland! Is that accomplished or relinquished? No. Brabant was a *sine qua non*! Is it gained? No. Then come *security* and *indemnity*! Are they obtained? No. The late minister told us, "that the example of a jacobin government in Europe, founded on the ruins of the holy altar and the tomb of a martyred monarch, was a spectacle so dreadful and infectious to Christendom, that we could never be safe while it existed, and could do nothing short of our very last effort for its destruction." Now, sir, let us see what we have got. What have we laid out for all these *fine words*, which at last gave way

to *security* and *indemnity*? Why, near 200,000 *lives*, and 300,000,000 of money! And we have gotten Ceylon and Trinidad. I propose, that, as we have given our heroes titles from the places where their laurels were won, our St. Vincents, Nelsons of the Nile, &c., so we should name Ceylon *Security Island*, *Isle of Indemnity*!!! Now, if we look at the state of Europe, we find the noble lord opposite has a most curious and convenient epithet, which he applies to what is rather a disagreeable object to him (Lord Hawkesbury). He talks of its being in an *uncomfortable*—Was it?—Oh, no!—*unsatisfactory state*. Germany, Holland, Italy, they are all in an *unsatisfactory state*; and so I suppose is Switzerland, which now seems likely to undergo a division among her powerful and generous neighbours. That innocent and virtuous, suffering, venerable country, is now, I suppose, in an *unsatisfactory state*! But Great Britain is all this time far from languor. She is in a *satisfactory state*. However, a grave and learned gentleman (master of the rolls) tells us, for our comfort, notwithstanding all that has happened, “here we all are debating and doing business in *all the old forms* and *customs* of the house!” Pray now, could not this have happened, supposing we had never gone to war? I think he should have made that out before he congratulated us so warmly upon our present debate under all the *old forms* of the house. The minister, too, goes on according to *old forms*: he has his majorities, according to *custom*. Prussia can go on too in its old forms! Is this armed repose, this hollow peace, then, the fruit of our long and glorious war? A great deal too has been said to be gained by the disposition of France to lay aside jacobinism. But the grand consolation of all, is in looking to Buonaparte as the *extirpator of jacobinism*. The learned gentleman, however, states to this house, that it is the nature of jacobinism, if driven from any country, always to look with pride and ambition to a settlement in the place where it had birth, and to fix itself there. So now, this “*child and champion of jacobinism*,” as he was styled, is to become a parri- cide. The *child of sin* is to *destroy his mother*! As this jacobinism is by the late minister stated to be a vice never to be eradicated from the *bosom* when it has *once* been implanted, all Europe will, doubtless, look to this great consul for its destruction. Indeed, he seems very desirous of extending his care to

his neighbours. Suppose you make him *King of Europe at once*, and he will soon extirpate all the jacobinism that infests it. My alarms begin when the alarms of some persons cease. The great question about the dangers of the French revolution were always upon the degree of the danger to be apprehended. Some danger was always allowed; but to suppose the people of this country so miserably infatuated as to fall in love with dirt, and blood, and guillotines, with all the atrocious deformities of the system of Robespierre, and that now, when France is “covered with glory”—though certainly without liberty, or anything that much resembles it—there should be nothing to dazzle and captivate, is out of my comprehension. If there be in this country men of dangerous ambition, Buonaparte is the man to hold out to them, by his ambitious and successful conduct, an example—an example how much stronger than anything that could attract the people in the exhibitions of riot and murder, unsociality and ferocity of manners? But they say, “he has begged pardon of God and man by his piety and penitence!” No; he has restored bishops with the salaries of curates, and made them all spies and informers in his favour by a solemn oath. He has made his own use of them all. How has he acted to Switzerland? How to us? Why, by condescending to receive our humiliating submission of everything you had acquired by the prowess of your army and navy. I must trust to our valour to defend us against his armies; and I pray Heaven to protect us against the effects of his *penitence* and *piety*! I must confess that nothing has been stated against this peace unaccompanied by proofs. I had rather given Malta to France, and taken the Cape, than have made this absurd arrangement. If the late secretary for the *war* department were here—who is, perhaps (*looking at Mr. Pitt*), by *proxy*—he might have made a whimsical charge against the present minister. *He* (Mr. Dundas) said, that “the minister who should give up the *Cape* would *deserve to lose his head*!!!!” There sits the minister, however, with his head safe upon his shoulders. I have almost a mind to attack him on the authority of Mr. Dundas! Malta would have been a great acquisition to us, and therein I agree with the war secretary. It would have stood, with the British standard flying in the centre of the Mediterranean, “like a great sea-mark saving those that eye it!” Ministers say the Emperor of Russia would not take care of

Malta. 'If they will tell me so upon *their honour*, I will believe them; otherwise, upon *my honour*, I won't believe anybody that says so. That did not appear to be Paul's idea of it. Perhaps he was mad. There was, however, some *method* in his *madness*; but, sir, there's a message Buonaparte has sent to his tribunate concerning some Russian soldiers, who are to go and take good care of the republic of the Seven Islands, and they may probably be intended for Alexandria, and may be connected with some plan against Turkey. Sir, if any *thing* in the *shape* of a *statesman* will say in this house, that he looks at that power, "*at which the world turns pale*," without apprehension, as the minister seems to tell us to-night, I must say he has a prodigious *stock of courage*, or no *skill* at all in *politics*! But let France have colonies! Oh, yes! "Let her have a good trade, that she may be afraid of war," says the learned member! "that's the way to make him love peace." He has had, to be sure, a sort of military education! He has been abroad, and is rather *rough company*; but if you put him behind the *counter* a little, he will mend exceedingly! When I was reading the treaty, I thought all the names of foreign places, viz. Pondicherry, Chandanagore, Cochin, Martinico, &c. all *cessions*. Not they: they are all so many *traps* and *holes* to catch this silly fellow in, and make a *merchant* of him! I really think the best way, upon this principle—would be this, let the merchants of London open a *public subscription*, and set him up at once! I hear a great deal respecting a certain *statue* about to be erected to the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) now *in my eye*, at a great expense. Send all that money over to the first consul, and give him what you talk of so much, *capital*, to begin trade with. I hope the right hon. gentleman over the way will, like the first consul, refuse a station for the present, and postpone it as a work to posterity. There is no harm, however, in marking out the place. The right hon. gentleman is musing, perhaps, on what square or place he will choose for its erection. I recommend the *Bank of England*. Now for the material. Not gold: no, no! he has not left enough of it. I should, however, propose *papier machè* and old bank notes! Ministers recommend us to make France commercial, for the sake of peaceful habits; and then tell us how impossible it is for her to increase in trade and commerce, for want of the necessary trade and capital. There my prospect

was damped. I was going now to India, but I remember I promised to avoid detail. I must keep my word. There was some *northern logic* here last night—something specious—a kind of *northern lights*—pretty enough to look at, but not very useful, about our possessions having a better security in India without than with our enemy's recognition of our rights. This, I confess, I cannot understand. The right hon. gentleman asks, "whether they would have been justified in breaking off the treaty?" That's a question between him and those who like the preliminaries; but it is otherwise with those who like neither. The secretary at war (Mr. Yorke) has said, "Buonaparte will look at us with a *soldier's eye*." I think he will with that of a *statesman*! Now the city militia, and some other corps, are disbanded, it is not exactly a spectacle for a soldier's eye. One cannot walk along the streets without hearing doubts expressed of the nature and security of the peace! And the next great inquiry is, "Pray who is minister now?" Is there, then, an interior and an exterior prime minister?—one who appears to the world, and another secret, irresponsible, directing minister? Certainly, in several respects I have given my testimony in behalf of the present ministers. In nothing more than for making the best peace, perhaps, they could, after their predecessors had left them in such a deplorable situation. But the present ministers continue to identify themselves with the former. They have ministerially supported a refusal to inquire into the state of the country; just as they were about to take the government they have passed an *indemnity* bill, and since that a *security* bill, in a resolution of thanks; and these are the only *indemnity* and *security* required!!! The ex-ministers are quite separate and distinct, and yet they and the new ministers are all *honourable friends*! What is the meaning of this mysterious connection? Why don't the minister defend his peace as the only good grounds of defence? Does he hold that situation only to make peace, and leave it for his predecessor? Do they bargain for support on one side of talent, and on the other of power? No minister of this country ever condescended to act under such an incomprehensible connection, and to receive such equivocal support! Part of the case is clear. If the late minister attacks the treaty, the present would turn round and say, "You brought me into a situation of necessity—you compelled me to sign a *disgraceful*

treaty—you had been arrogant, and I have put up with indignity—Buonaparte, by his minister, Otto, would laugh at me!—this work is yours—you placed us in this sad dilemma! The minister takes no strong ground of defence: I won't say he dare not take it. There he sits to receive the *attack* of the *new* confederacy, who are not great in numbers, but in talents. The ex-minister is mounted on a kind of *hill-fort* to fire down on the *assailants*, but the *garrison* is all manned with *deserters* from the principles of the war! I should like to support the present minister on fair ground; but what is he? a sort of outside *passenger*, or rather a man leading the horses round a corner, while reins, whip, and all, are in the hands of the coachman on the *box*!—(*Looks at Mr. Pitt's elevated seat, three or four benches above that of the treasury.*) Why not have an union of the two ministers, or, at least, some intelligible connection? When the ex-minister quitted office, almost all the *subordinate* ministers kept their places! How was it that the whole family did not move together? Had he only one *covered waggon* to carry *friends and goods*? Or has he left directions behind him that they may know where to call? I remember a fable of *Aristophanes*: it is translated from Greek into decent English. I mention this for the country gentlemen. It is of a man that sat so long on a seat (about as long, perhaps, as the ex-minister did on the treasury-bench) that he grew to it. When Hercules pulled him off he left all the sitting part of the man behind him! The house can take the allusion. This is not a noble, manly kind of coalition between these gentlemen. Of that ex-minister I would just say, that no man admires his splendid talents more than I do. If ever there was a man formed and fitted by nature to benefit his country, and to give it lustre, he is such a man. He has no low, little, mean, petty vices. He has too much good sense, taste, and talent to set his mind upon ribands, stars, titles, and other appendages and idols of rank. He is of a nature not at all suited to be the creature or tool of any court.—(*Mr. Pitt bowed repeatedly.*)—But while I thus say of him no more than I think his character and great talents deserve, I must tell him how grossly he has misapplied them in the politics of this country; I must tell him again how he has augmented our national debt and of the lives he lost in this war. I must tell him he has done more against the privileges of the people, increased more the

power of the crown, and injured more the constitution of his country than any minister I can mention. Of the resignation of the late ministry, I don't believe one word of what is said about catholic emancipation. I could as soon believe it was because they had discovered the longitude. If they did go out on that ground, they were certainly at liberty so to do. But, after they quitted their situations, they circulated a paper in Ireland, attributing the failure of an indispensable measure to resistance in a certain quarter, and that quarter was their *sovereign*, and directing the Irish catholics to look to *them* for hope of relief. If this was short of high treason, how far short of it I cannot define. If, however, that measure was necessary to carrying on hostilities, we have certainly done right so far in making this peace.

Mr. Sheridan concluded with stating, that he considered it fair to those who had entertained the sentiments he did, of the rise and progress of the war, to record the real grounds on which we approve of a peace, the terms of which are so inadequate and so insecure. Supposing that Mr. Wyndham's motion would be rejected, he had framed his in such a manner as to come as an amendment to Lord Hawkesbury's; and, according to the precedent of the other, might make it in the shape of a resolution, by leaving out all the words of the address but *that*, and then proceed:—

“ It is the opinion of this house, that the omission of various opportunities of negotiating a peace with advantage to this country; and more especially the rejection of the overtures made by the Chief Consul of France, in January, 1800, appears to this house to have led to a state of affairs, which rendered peace so necessary, as to justify the important and painful sacrifices which his Majesty has been advised to make for the attainment thereof.”

Mr. Sheridan's amendment was negatived without a division.

MAY 24.

BULL BAITING.

The second reading of the bill for abolishing Bull Baiting was read.

MR. SHERIDAN observed, that he should most probably have given a silent vote, were it not for some points in the speech of the hon. gentleman who had just sat down (Mr. Frankland).

He had previously attended to the speech of the right hon. gentleman who was so decided an opponent of the measure, and he could not help admiring the ingenuity, talents, and address which he had displayed in a speech which he thought well calculated to produce an effect on the imagination ; but, perhaps, of all the speeches he ever heard, it was the least calculated to produce solid conviction. With respect to the support he received from the hon. gentleman who spoke last, he was at first rather dubious of it, and were it not for the animation of his manner, he really should have thought that he intended to follow the ironical line adopted by an hon. friend of his (Mr. S.) under the gallery—a great deal of what had been said, might be reduced to a short question, which, for the sake of illustration, he would put in the metaphorical language of an hon. gentleman under the gallery, who said, “ as the higher orders of the people had their Billington, the lower orders should have their bull-baiting.” Another member declared, as an argument against the bill, that through the means of bull-baiting, he raised more men for his Majesty in Lancashire, and also more subjects in the way of increasing the population, than by any other means he knew. This might be an admirable argument to influence a recruiting serjeant, but that any one should think, that it could have an effect on a grave and deliberating assembly of legislators, more especially, when it produced effects which involved considerations of vice and profligacy on the part of women, was to him a little extraordinary. In some countries the disgraceful practice in question did not prevail, but that the measure could operate with respect to the country to which that hon. gentleman referred, either in relation to the excellent breed of bulls, or the sources of increased population alluded to, was a little questionable. All of the topics in the right hon. gentleman’s (Mr. Wyndham) speech, however, he should have occasion to allude to ; and first, with respect to the idea, that such subjects were unworthy the attention of the legislature. After warmly animadverting on what he had said respecting the estimation and progress of private bills in that house, Mr. Sheridan proceeded to express his surprise, that if the right hon. gentleman thought the subject so low, so trifling, as to be utterly unworthy of the interference of the legislature, he should have deemed it necessary to oppose the bill in a very long and elaborate speech, a speech which, in his

mind, had rather been prepared for the occasion ; in more points than one of it, the lamp was to be smelt ; it possessed a climax of quotation, from modern as well as ancient authors. Xenophon, Virgil, Milton, and other writers, were copiously referred to. All this matter too, was well arranged. If the right hon. gentleman deemed the subject trifling, and unworthy of attention, why take all that trouble about it ? Or if the right hon. gentleman had displayed so much ability and address, or made so great a figure in eloquence, while decrying the definitive treaty, he should not, most probably, have been in so small a minority. “What,” it was exclaimed, “would Europe say, if, at such a juncture, we occupied ourselves in such discussions ?” With respect to the right hon. gentleman’s mode of considering as well as treating this question, he felt for him—he felt for the state of his mind, and for that irritation of which it must be susceptible in contemplating the return of peace, and he must allow for his feelings on the cessation of hostilities in every part of Europe ; in which view it would appear, as if he wished to make some compensation to himself, in fomenting a war between the bulls and the dogs. It was rather extraordinary, that though the right hon. gentleman denied the subject to be of importance, yet he considered the measure to proceed from the combined effects of jacobinism and methodism, to overturn the constitution of the country ; and another gentleman seemed to be of opinion, that if the lower order of the people were not indulged in the joyous and jovial practice of bull-baiting, the constitution must eventually be overturned. Another point respected the amusements of the lower orders of the people. With respect to these, nothing could give him greater pleasure, than that they could be effectually revised and reduced to a salutary system, founded on just and rational principles. He would bring to the right hon. gentleman’s recollection a circumstance relative to this point, namely, a society which was some time ago established, in which an hon. general, since dead (Burgoyne), was a leading member, and in which they both were concerned ; the object of which was to revive the practice of the genuine old English sports and amusements ; in this plan, however, it was expressly set forth, that the barbarous practice of bull-baiting was not to be included. In regard to the argument held out, that if this custom was suppressed, we should

not know where to stop, and that the amusements of hunting, shooting, and fishing, would become the next objects of suppression; to this idea, he could shortly answer, that these amusements have no more analogy to the barbarous practice in question, than anything the most opposite in their natures could have; and he must observe, with regard to the hon. gentleman who had beheld those scenes over and over again, that no man could advance such arguments or defend the practice, who had not been inured to it. But that gentleman said, "the object was, not to torture the animal—that cruelty was not inflicted for the sake of cruelty;" where was the difference in the effect, or in the tortures of the wretched animal, when the cruelty proceeded only from sport? He could conceive different sources of passion from which cruelty might arise, as wrath, malice, fear, cowardice, and worse than these, was it, when proceeding from beastly appetite, from the effect of gluttony; but certainly worse than any, or than all put together, was the nature of inflicting cruelty merely for sport. If the house suffered the bill to go to a committee, they could produce facts which must excite feelings of horror and indignation. What the hon. gentleman said of our deriving useful instructions from animals, was in a great degree well founded; but then it must be from animals in a free state of nature; in circumstances wherein, as the poet happily expresses it, you may

"Learn from the little Nautilus to sail."

But not from animals in a state of coercion or torture. He expatiated with great feeling, animation, and effect, on the barbarous custom of bull-baiting, as not only producing the most inconceivable tortures to the wretched animal, and often to the instruments of his torment, but tending to deaden the feelings of humanity in, and to brutalize the minds of the beholder, and at such sights women and children were often present; of this he stated some facts in illustration; among these, that of a brutal bull-baiter, who, possessing an old bitch that lately had a large litter of puppies, was willing to show the stanchness of her blood, and the extent of her prowess; he set the bitch at the bull, she pinned, and fastened on him, and in that situation he literally cut her to pieces, the animal still keeping her hold. He then sold the puppies for five guineas a-piece; after this he took out his knife, and in a climax of

brutality, cut the bitch's throat. These facts showed the diabolical and malignant spirit with which such sports were conducted, and encouraging those, instead of making a people manly and generous, would, by inuring them to acts of cruelty, render them base, and fit to submit to the yoke of tyranny, and to bow to a rigour beyond the law; and to encourage them in such acts of barbarism would also render the people barbarous and tyrannical in their turn, teach them to oppress the weak, by rioting in the blood and tortures of dumb and unoffending animals, and on all occasions, as a sure result, to bow the neck to the yoke of power. Such practices surely called for the interference of the legislature; they degraded the national character, as well as brutalized the people, and had incontrovertibly extended to the length of *contra bonus mores*. Undoubtedly, as has been said, cruelties may be practised upon animals, and of the most shocking kinds, in circumstances which it was beyond the power of law to remedy. True, but if these practices were exhibited openly, they would become nuisances, and call for the interference of the legislature. Those bold and bare-faced practices, which exhibit their sanguinary details to the eye of day, should certainly be put down; it was a question, whether the existing laws may not be sufficient to remedy the evil, by the interference of the magistrates. However that might be, the old law seemed to be worn out; its teeth could not be fixed upon the evil; it was the object of the present bill to remedy this defect, and to render the law efficacious.

General Gascoyne moved that the bill be read this day three months. The house divided. For the amendment 64; against it 5.

DECEMBER 8.

ARMY ESTIMATES—WAR WITH FRANCE.

MR. SHERIDAN said, sir, being in the situation alluded to by the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down, of not being able to agree precisely with any of those who have preceded me, yet of being, at the same time, unwilling to give a silent vote on the present occasion, I rise with some sentiments of reluctance. There is one thing, however, in which we all coincide; it is, that the crisis in which we are placed is so big with tremendous importance, so pregnant with mighty difficulties, so full of appre-

hensions and dangers, that the house and the country have a right to know what are the intentions and views of those by whose exertions we may expect to be extricated from the complication of embarrassments, and snatched from the very brink of destruction. Sir, one of the circumstances I most regret in this debate is, the references that have been made to the characters and abilities of persons supposed to be fit to fill particular offices. I feel this as a subject of regret, and, feeling so, am sorry that my hon. friend near me made any allusion even to one man, whom of all men upon earth I most love and respect, because I do view the crisis to be one of such moment and peril; and because, if ever there was a time in which we should prove to the people of England that we are above all party feelings, that we are above all party distinctions, that we are superior to any petty scramble for places and power, that time is the present.—Sir, in speaking upon these topics, I do find a disposition in some gentlemen to rebuke any man who shall deliver an opinion with respect to the First Consul of France. One hon. gentleman, who rebuked an hon. general that spoke before him, declared that he would not give his opinion with respect to the conduct of France to Switzerland; and what does his rebuke amount to? He confesses that, upon that subject, there can be but one opinion. Why then, sir, he either adopts the opinion of the hon. general or not. If he does adopt it, he gives us as strong an opinion against the conduct of France as can possibly be given. If he does not adopt it, why then all we can say is, that there are two opinions. “But what,” he asks, “has Switzerland to do with the question?” It has this to do with it: the hon. general introduced the subject in this way; he contends that a power which is capable of such unprovoked aggression, and such perfidy, is the power that ought to be watched. But the hon. gentleman goes on to assert, that we have nothing to do with the case of Switzerland, nothing to do with France, nothing but with her power. Nothing but her power! as if that were little. He asks too, “where is the great difference between France under the Bourbons and under her present ruler?” Why, sir, the hon. general inferred, from the conduct of France, that, with her growing power, she had a growing disposition to mischief. “But is that power,” demands the hon. gentleman, “greater now than it was last June?” Perhaps it is not, sir; but her

mischievous disposition is greater ; and if I am asked to bring a proof of the truth of my assertion, I must bring the case of Switzerland. Sir, if I see a purposed contempt of the independence of a nation ; if I see a perfidious disregard of the faith of treaties ; if I see a power withdraw her assistance, only to return and entrap a country of freemen with greater certainty ; why then, I say, there has been a change, and a great change too, and that such a power we have a right to watch. “ But,” says the hon. gentleman, “ we have no right to make use of invectives against the first consul of France.” I will abstain if I can ; I say if I can, because I feel that even a simple narrative may be construed into invective. With regard to the general question of a disposition to peace or war, I declare that I am as strongly and as sincerely for the preservation of peace as any man, and that I do not consider war as any remedy for the evils complained of. If a war spirit be springing up in this country, if a chivalrous disposition be observable, if a sentiment of indignation be rising upon the subject of the treatment of Switzerland, I for one shall contend that the treatment of Switzerland is no cause of war. I would therefore say, preserve peace if possible : peace if possible, because the effects of war, always calamitous, may be calamitous indeed, buckling, as we should be forced to do, all our sinews and strength to that power in a contest with her upon such grounds. I repeat, therefore, peace if possible ; but I add, resistance, prompt, resolute, determined resistance to the first aggression, be the consequences what they may. Influenced by these sentiments, I shall vote cordially and cheerfully for this large peace establishment ; and it is because I shall vote for it that I think myself bound to state my reasons. Sir, some gentlemen seem to consider what they advance as so many axioms too clear to need explanation or to require defence. But, when I vote for so large an establishment, I think myself not at liberty to bind such a burthen upon my constituents, without stating the grounds upon which I act, and the principles by which I am prompted. Sir, I have listened, with all the attention I am master of, to the different arguments that have been advanced in the present debate. One hon. gentleman, who spoke second, appears to be a decided enemy to a great establishment, and the reasons he gave for his opposition, I confess, perfectly astonished me. Luckily he has no rapid flippancy in his manner ;

his sentiments are delivered too soberly and sedately to be mistaken. I am sure I mean nothing disrespectful to that gentleman, who amply repays the attention that is paid to him. But he says, "if ministers had only said to him that danger existed, he for one would have voted for the force proposed." Does he doubt the danger? He complains that his Majesty's ministers do not state it precisely. But does he pretend that he does not see and feel it? Can any one look at the map of Europe and be blind to it? Can any one have a heart to resist apprehended injury, and say that we ought not to be prepared? "But," he asks, "why raise only one hundred thousand men? You can never equal the military power of France, and, as you cannot, why stop at one hundred thousand? Why not raise one hundred and twenty, one hundred and thirty, or one hundred and forty thousand?" If this argument be worth anything, it applies equally to our raising only one thousand. Why, if we can never be equal to France, raise a man? Another gentleman, who spoke last, has alluded to alliances, and I agree perfectly with him in what he advanced against making any pledges. He has alluded to the fate of the pledges made in the war of the succession, in the war of 1741; but, if he meant to be impartial, he need not have gone back so far; he need not have travelled beyond the last war; he might have mentioned the pledges then given; he might have recollected the pledge of never giving up the Netherlands; he might have recalled to our minds the pledge of obtaining indemnity for the past and security for the future; he might have dwelt upon the pledge of exhausting the last drop of our blood in the contest for religion, order, and civilized society, the *toto certatum corpore regni*; he might have reminded us of all these pledges made, and of all of them having been abandoned. He confesses his warmth of friendship for the late minister, and he certainly never showed it more than in stopping so short with his historical narrative of pledges. The next excellent reasoning of the hon. gentleman who spoke second against the proposed vote, is that, in the first year of the war, there will be an immense army drawn upon the opposite coast, and therefore, now it is not necessary to be prepared. When the army is upon your shores, when the trumpet of the enemy sounds at your gates, then it is time to be prepared. Appearance of security, he contends, often gives the effect of

security. If we have large armies, France will think we raise them through fear; if we do not have them, she will think that we feel ourselves perfectly secure. I have heard instances, sir, where mounting wooden guns upon a fort has produced the same security as if there had been real ones. But unluckily, in this instance, for us, by our constitutional form of proceeding, our whole force must be known: we cannot pass upon an enemy wooden guns, and an army at Brentford. If we vote no force, an enemy will know we have none. "But have no arms, throw away your guns," is the advice of the hon. gentleman. Sir, when every house in my neighbourhood has been attacked and robbed by a gang of ruffians, how my having no arms is to save me from a visit from them, I must leave the hon. gentleman to explain. His next argument is, that it is unreasonable in us to believe that Buonaparte wishes to be at war with us; for he thinks the French have nothing to gain by invasion. Nothing to gain? What else have they to lose but that of which it has been said they have so much to spare, and what have they not to gain? Sir, I cannot but think this as unbecoming a sentiment as ever was uttered. But it is unreasonable to think that the French wish to meddle with us. Why, I protest I cannot explain. If, as has been said, they have felt our arms, they who have been everywhere else successful, must view the only power whose arms they have felt, with feelings of warm resentment, and with sentiments of mortified pride. But look at the map of Europe; there, where a great man (who, however, was always wrong on this subject) said he looked for France, and found nothing but a chasm. Look at that map now, and see nothing but France. It is in our power to measure her territory, to reckon her population, but it is scarcely within the grasp of any man's mind to measure the ambition of Buonaparte. Why, when all Europe bows down before him—why, when he has subdued the whole continent, he should feel such great respect for us, I am at a loss to discover. If, then, it be true, as I have stated, that his ambition is of that immeasurable nature, there are abundant and obvious reason why it must be progressive—reasons much stronger than any that could have been used under the power of the Bourbons. They were ambitious, but it was not so necessary for them to feed their subjects with the spoils and plunder of war; they had the attachment of a long-established family applied to them; they had the effect and advantage of hereditary

succession. But I see, in the very situation and composition of the power of Buonaparte, a physical necessity for him to go on in this barter with his subjects, and to promise to make them the masters of the world if they will consent to be his slaves. I see then, I repeat, this strong reason for his pursuing this system of policy. If that be the case, must not his most anxious looks be directed to Great Britain? Everything else is petty and contemptible compared with it. Russia, if not in his power, is at least in his influence—Prussia is at his back—Italy is his vassal—Holland is in his grasp—Spain at his nod—Turkey in his toils—Portugal at his foot :—when I see this, can I hesitate in stating my feelings, still less can I hesitate in giving a vote that shall put us upon our guard against the machinations and workings of such an ambition? But it has been said, that it is possible he may mean nothing more than rivalry of commerce. Happy, sir, shall I be, if such an idea enter into his head at all, much more if it form part of his plans. But I confess that I cannot see that it does. I mark him taking positions calculated to destroy our commerce, but I do not find him doing anything for the mutual benefit of the trade of the two countries. I see him anxious to take possession of Louisiana, and to use the ports of St. Domingo to carry out the West India and Jamaica trade. I can conceive a possible case, in which such positions might be taken as to force us to surrender our commerce without a stroke. An ignorant observer may see two armies, and may say there is no war, because there is no battle; yet one of them may make such movements as to compel the other to surrender without striking a blow.

Of the commercial talents of Buonaparte, I can be supposed to know but little; but bred in camps, it cannot be imagined that his commercial knowledge can be very great; and, indeed, if I am rightly informed, he is proceeding in the old plan of heavy duties and prohibitions. But he would go a shorter way to work with us. The old country has credit and capital, and commercial enterprise; and he may think, if he can subjugate us, that he can carry them off to France like so many busts and marbles. But he would find himself mistaken; that credit would wither under the gripe of power; that capital would sink into the earth, if trodden upon by the foot of a despot; that commercial enterprise would, I believe lose all its vigour in the presence of an arbitrary government. No, sir, instead of

putting his nation apprentice to commerce, he has other ideas in his head. My humble apprehension is, that, though in the tablet and volume of his mind there may be some marginal note about cashiering the King of Etruria; yet, that the whole text is occupied with the destruction of this country. This is the first vision that breaks upon him through the gleam of the morning; this is his last prayer at night, to whatever deity he addresses it, whether to Jupiter or Mahomet; to the goddess of battles, or the goddess of reason. But, sir, the only consolation is, that he is a great philosopher and philanthropist. I believe this hyper-philanthropy has done more harm than ever it did good. He has discovered that we all belong to the Western family. Sir, I confess I feel a sentiment of deep indignation, when I hear (I take it from report) that this scrap of nonsense was uttered to one of the most enlightened of the human race. To this family party I do not wish to belong. He may invite persons, if he please, to dinner, and, like Lord Peter, say that, "this tough crust is excellent mutton." He may toss a sceptre to the King of Etruria to play with, and keep a rod to scourge him in the corner; he may have thought at first his Cisalpine republic a fine growing child, and may have found it a rickety bantling; but I feel contempt for all this mockery. Let us, sir, abstain from invective, only let us speak the truth. Why, sir, what I have said is nothing but the truth. Let us be visiting acquaintance, but I do implore him not to consider us as one of the family. Perhaps, sir, it is unnecessary for me to state any more reasons for voting for this large peace establishment. All I desire is, not to have it understood that, in stating my fears, I speak from a well informed judgment. On that account it is that I say, do not go to war; on that account it is that I state my apprehensions as rational grounds for great vigilance, and for strong preparation. Sir, there are two other points pressed by several gentlemen, to which I beg leave to refer. I mean the fitness of the persons in power, and the spirit of the people. The power of the country consists in its army, its navy, and its finance, in the talent and integrity of its ministers, and, above all, in the spirit of the people. Upon this second branch of the question, though I have said some things which may be considered as grateful to that party which may be denominated the war party, yet I fear I shall be compelled to state by and by

some circumstances that may not be quite so agreeable to them. It is a matter of no importance to the house, perhaps, to know why I was absent on the two first days of the session. I am anxious to hear the part which men would take, and I do confess I never felt so much disgust at any circumstance, as to find on the first day of the session, instead of an unanimous vote for vigilance and preparation, a call from some to give us back our places. The noble lord's friends may be divided into two classes; those who call for a change of ministers, and for war. And here I must say, sir, for one, that I thank them for their frankness in stating what they have done, because their frankness is an antidote to the fury of their counsels. The noble lord says, "we do not want to go to war; we only wish to have other persons in power;" the noble lord deals with the ingenuousness of youth, as I say; with the experience of age, according to others. But what should we get by this change? Would those persons he recommends have acted differently from the present ministers? Would they have gone to war for any of the events that have occurred since the peace? Would they have gone to war for the annexing of Piedmont to France?—for the Cisalpine republic?—for the invasion of Switzerland? No, for none of these. They would have done as ministers have done, but more vigorously; they would have shown more grumbling patience; they would have made wry faces; they would not have stood with their hands before them; no, but with their arms akimbo. What would they have got by this? Would they have obtained anything more by all this grudging and wincing?—Would such a mode of conduct have become the character and dignity of the country? Sir, it is not to be inferred, because the right hon. gentleman opposite me did none of these things, that he felt no indignation. I learn from his Majesty's speech, every word of which I approve, that his ministers are determined not to be shut out of the continent. I say, sir, I approve of the speech, because it satisfied me that a sense of wrong, and a resentment of injury, may live under moderate language. But these ministers, it seems, are the incapable gentlemen. Will gentlemen show us any act of base submission on their part? If they can—if they prove that they did any act with respect to Switzerland, and meanly retracted it afterwards, I will be the first to inveigh against them. But these gentlemen show us no

such acts ; they seem as if they considered the ministers, now the drudgery of signing the peace is done, as *functi officii*, and as if they ought to go out ; as if one was a mere goose-quill, and the other a stick of sealing-wax, which are done with, and ought to be thrown under the table. We know that *Touchstone* says, as a good ground for quarrel, “ That he don’t like the cut of a certain courtier’s beard.” Perhaps this capricious dislike cannot be better exemplified than by the sentiment expressed in the well-known epigram of Martial :—

“ Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare,
Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te ! ”

The English parody may be more applicable to these gentlemen .—

“ I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell ;
But this, I’m sure, I know full well,
I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.”

It is fair, sir, to say, that this English parody, so unfavourable to the doctor, proceeds from the mouth of a fair lady, who has privileges to like and dislike, which would ill become a member of this house. Sir, I contend that no solid reason has been offered to be urged against these ministers. How, I would ask, has the right hon. gentleman forfeited the confidence of the people ? and why are we told that there is but one man alone who can save the country ? But it seems—and I must frankly confess that I was utterly astonished when I heard such an assertion made use of—that his Majesty’s ministers assumed the reins of government at a most inviting period. Sir, I defy any man to show me a period of greater difficulty. The right hon. gentleman who, in the chair of this house, had so amply deserved and secured the respect of every member in it, could not but have quitted it with feelings of regret. But the expeditions to the Baltic and to Egypt were prepared ; true. Yet, was success certain ? Was it not the act of chance, and the great skill shown by the noble admiral (Nelson) that brought the expedition to the Baltic to a favourable issue ? Did the late ministers conceal their fears with respect to the expedition to Egypt ? That it was most glorious in its event, and that the country ought to bind the brows of the meanest soldier engaged in it with laurels, I am ready to allow. But it cannot be denied that, after the ex-

pedition had been off the coast in Italy, and was in Marmorice Bay, orders were sent to stop the expedition altogether. With respect to the negotiations for peace, their predecessors knew that the present ministers would have to deal with men who, it might be supposed, would be glad of an occasion to retort the insolence of Lord Grenville's letter. If the enemy had parodied their letter as their only answer to us, if they had said, "we will wait for experience and the evidence of facts with respect to the new ministry;" if they had said, "restore that old whig constitution which the former ministers have so impaired," we might have thought such conduct trifling, and beneath them; but we could not have questioned its fairness. Sir, though his Majesty's ministers must have been prepared to expect humiliation, yet they made peace, I will venture to say, on terms comparatively more advantageous to the country than those that were offered at Lisle. Of these ministers, sir, I know, also, that they have not renewed any of their predecessor's oppressive acts. But this, some gentlemen will contend, is a proof of their weakness and unfitness. Never too, sir, did the treasury interfere so little in the general election. This, again, may be advanced by some as an instance of their incapacity. Nay, the north was almost left to a member of the late administration. When, therefore, gentlemen talk in future of Mr. Pitt's being the fittest person to save the country, they ought to add also the name of Mr. Dundas. But what did these gentlemen expect from the present chancellor of the exchequer? We treated him, when in the chair of this house, with the respect he merited. He has, I believe, sir, over our present worthy speaker, the advantage in attitude; but did they expect that when he was minister he was to stand up and call Europe to order? Was he to send Mr. Colman, the serjeant-at-arms, to the Baltic, and order the northern powers to the bar of the house? Was he to see the powers of Germany scrambling like members over the benches, and say, "gentlemen must take their places?" Was he expected to cast his eye to the Tuscan gallery, and exclaim, that "strangers must withdraw?" Was he to stand across the Rhine, and say, "the Germans to the right, and the French to the left?" If he could have done all these things, I, for one, should always vote that the speaker of the house should be appointed the minister of the country. But the right hon. gentleman has done all that a reasonable man could expect him to do. Sir, I confess

I wish to know what Mr. Pitt himself thinks. I should be glad to hear what his sentiments are of the call made for him—and loudly made too—in another place by a vigorous statesman. I well remember, sir, and so do we all, the character he gave of the present administration. The justice of his character of the first lord of the admiralty, no man can question. Of the accuracy of his judgment with respect to the present chancellor of the exchequer, it does not become us to entertain a doubt. The noble secretary of state was better qualified for the situation than any man in the country, with an exception made, I believe, in favour of my hon. friend (Mr. Fox) near me. Does Mr. Pitt mean to retract that character? I cannot suppose he does. I must believe that he left, in his judgment, the best administration that could be left. I have heard some gentlemen attach to the present ministry the appellation of a mawkish mixture; but if I were to compare them to anything, I should say, that Mr. Pitt and the ex-secretary of war, acted as men fond of wine (which I certainly do not mean to impute to them as a fault), and drinking a bottle of Tokay. Though you may take what appears to be the best, and leave only what seems to be the lees, yet, if you only pour a bottle of good white wine upon them, you have as good a bottle of Tokay as ever. Sir, I think the mixture as good and as wholesome to the constitution as it could have been. I am sure I hear with joy that it is not on account of ill health that the right hon. gentleman, to whom I have alluded, is absent. I repeat, sir, when I see so many persons anxious about that gentleman, I am glad to hear that his health is re-established. But how, I would ask, can we, with any consistency, turn out the man who made the peace, to bring in the person who avowed his approbation of it? Sir, it is since that peace was made that gentlemen had voted a statue to Mr. Pitt; but, whenever they erect that statue, let them cover it with laurels, so as not to show its nose: yet still a piece of the olive must go with it, for he approved and supported the peace. Sir, I cannot persuade myself to think he is playing a double game, or that he has retracted the opinion he delivered in this house; but everything should stand plain, everything should be explicit. I have heard of one person playing two different games at chess for two different persons at the same time; but I never heard of a person playing one of his hands against the other. I suspect, therefore, there

has been some mistake in the telegraphic communication ; that the political Philidor's game has been misunderstood ; that his friends have displaced a knight and a castle, when they should only have taken two pawns ; that they have made an attempt to checkmate the king, when they had no instructions for doing it. Sir, I cannot forget the period when the august personage of the sovereign was held up as the only man who was against extending privileges to the catholics in Ireland ; and I cannot, therefore, brook the idea of calling that right hon. gentleman back to power, and forcing him upon the crown. I expected, when I came into this house, to hear much said against Buonaparte, but I had not the slightest expectation of hearing anything against the prerogative of the crown. Mr. Pitt the only man to save the country ! No single man can save the country. If a nation depends only upon one man, it cannot, and, I will add, it does not, deserve to be saved ; it can only be done by the parliament and the people. Sir, I say, therefore, I cannot believe that there is a back and a fore-door to this Egerian grotto. We have all heard, I dare say, of a classical exhibition in this town, *The Invisible Girl*. Here, however, I hope we shall have no whisperings backwards and forwards, no speaking through tubes, no invisible agency. I hope, too, that we shall have it declared, as it ought to be, that these opinions, which have been rumoured about, are unfounded. I shall now address a few words to those gentlemen who would hurry us into war ; and here, sir, I must say, that, of all persons living, the ex-secretary of war is the last man who can consistently call out for war. He despised the warning voice of my hon. friend ; he turned a deaf ear to his predictions, that we should only consolidate and strengthen the power of France. His answers always were, he should despise the power of France, could he but see jacobinism destroyed. Is it not destroyed ?

“ Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcanian tiger—
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble—”

The right hon. gentleman's wishes are gratified ; jacobinism is killed and gone, and by whom ? By him who can no longer be called the child and champion of jacobinism—by Buonaparte. I remember to have heard jacobinism compared to Antæus, who

gained strength at every throw : but Buonaparte proceeded like Hercules ; he gave it a true fraternal hug, and strangled it. Did the French annex Piedmont, did they enter Switzerland with the Rights of Man ? Did they talk of those rights when Buonaparte told the people of Italy they were a set of dolts and drivellers, and were unfit to govern themselves ? But now the right hon. gentleman seems in a greater fright than ever. He seems as if he had rather have the old ghost back again. Most whimsically he wants to unite all parties against France—

“ Black spirits and white,
Blue spirits and grey,”

all are welcome to him. The moderate jacobins he takes to his bosom ; they were only misled by their feelings. The violent jacobins he appeals to as men of proud spirits. He wishes to sing *Ca Ira* to them, and to head them all. “ O ! had I,” he sighs, “ but plenty of jacobins here !” But on what principle would they carry on the war ? If they were able to curtail the power of Buonaparte, would not their views increase, and would they ever stop without making an example of the regicide republic ? If they will speak out fairly, will they not confess this ? Will the country, then, for such a purpose, consent to turn out the present ministers ? Sir, upon the spirit of the country I wish to say a few words. I have heard from one noble lord, with regret, what I hope was but a slip, that the spirit of the country is worn out. I think that noble lord must retract that idea. Sir, I certainly looked to the rejoicings at the peace as an unmanly and irrational exultation. Do I rebuke the people for rejoicing at the blessings of peace ? No, sir, but for rejoicing without asking about the terms. Did they rejoice that we had gained Trinidad and Ceylon ? Would two farthing candles have been burnt less had we not obtained them ? No, sir, if they had believed that they had been fighting for civilized order, morality, and religion ; and if, believing this, they exulted in such a peace, then it proves that their spirit was worn out. But I allude to this, in order that the enemy may not be led into a mistake upon the subject. Sir, one of the disadvantages attending the present administration is, that they will not turn, when they are attacked by the last administration. They are hampered by the votes they gave for the war. But from the

period of the allegations that it was a war for the Scheldt, I assert that it continued to be a war upon false pretences. The people were told that it was a war for religion and good order, and they found that peace was ready to be made at Lisle, without any reference to those causes. The right hon. gentleman says, "what baseness, while religion was in their mouths, to consent to steal a sugar island!" It is true, sir, though it comes a little extraordinarily from that man who was one of the cabinet ministers at the time of the negotiation at Lisle. It should appear as if there had indeed been great discord in the cabinet; "there never was greater," says the hon. gentleman. They acted not merely like men in a boat, rowing different ways, but like men in the boat of a balloon. Up the ex-secretary of war was ascending to the clouds, whilst Mr. Dundas was opening the valve and letting out the gas to descend; while one was throwing out ballast to mount to the most chivalrous heights, the other was attempting to let drop an anchor upon a West India island. Each of these ministers was suffered to have his favourite plan. The ex-secretary at war was allowed to nibble at the coast of France, the war secretary of state to make a descent upon a sugar island; and thus they went on till the letter from Lord Grenville—that letter never to be forgotten, and, I will add, never to be forgiven—made its appearance, and the people took a deep and settled disgust. Why did this not appear? And this, sir, ought to be a lesson to us. The mouths of the people were shut and gagged, and the government were acting without knowing anything of their circumstances. Sir, in such circumstances, the integrity of their minds was disgusted, and they were glad to get rid of the war at any rate. Upon this subject I have dwelt the more particularly, because I wish Buonaparte not to mistake the cause of the joy of the people. He should know, that if he commits any act of aggression against them, they will enter singly into the contest, rather than suffer any attack upon their honour and their independence. I shall proceed no further. I perfectly agree with my hon. friend, that war ought to be avoided, though he does not agree with me on the means best calculated to produce that effect. From any opinion he may express, I never differ but with the greatest reluctance. For him my affection, my esteem, and my attachment, are unbounded, and they will end only with my life. But I think an important lesson is to be

learnt from the arrogance of Buonaparte. He says "he is an instrument in the hands of Providence—an envoy of God." He says "he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to restore Switzerland to happiness, and to elevate Italy to splendour and importance." Sir, I think he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to make the English love their constitution the better; to cling to it with more fondness; to hang round it with truer tenderness. Every man feels, when he returns from France, that he is coming from a dungeon to enjoy the light and life of British independence. Sir, whatever abuses exist, we shall still look with pride and pleasure upon the substantial blessings we still enjoy. I believe too, sir, that he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to make us more liberal in our political differences, and to render us determined, with one hand and heart, to oppose any aggressions that may be made upon us. If that aggression be made, my hon. friend will, I am sure, agree with me, that we ought to meet it with a spirit worthy of these islands; that we ought to meet it with a conviction of the truth of this assertion, that the country which has achieved such greatness, has no retreat in littleness; that if we could be content to abandon everything, we should find no safety in poverty, no security in abject submission. Finally, sir, that we ought to meet it with a fixed determination to perish in the same grave with the honour and independence of the country.

FEBRUARY 23, 1803.

PRINCE OF WALES'S ESTABLISHMENT.

The chancellor of the exchequer moved, "That his Majesty be empowered to issue annually to the Prince of Wales a sum not exceeding sixty thousand pounds."

MR. SHERIDAN said, he would have wished to have abstained from troubling the house, but that some points were absolutely necessary to be explained. He was ready to admit the arguments employed in support of the proposition by the right hon. and learned gentleman (the solicitor-general) opposite to him; the proposition itself was equally satisfactory to those who wished to replace his royal highness in his constitutional splendour, and to those who watched with a jealous eye the expenditure of the public money. There was, however, one thing which did not appear to be admitted, and which he was particularly desirous should be stated; it was not admitted that the Prince of

Wales, so far from burdening the public, had, on the contrary, made a considerable sacrifice to them; this certainly was the fact, and it should be known to the country. He was himself a real friend to the comforts and splendour which his royal highness ought to enjoy, but he was, at the same time, a greater friend to his honour and character. The prince came forward for the third time. Upon the first application, notwithstanding the arguments employed by the learned and unlearned, notwithstanding the vast fund of legal and historical erudition which was displayed, nothing was ascertained with regard to the petition of right. First, it was to be presented to the lord chancellor; then it was discovered that the chancellor was not the proper person, but that the petition should be given to Lord Pelham. Afterwards it was to be laid before the chancellor, and then it came into this house. An assurance had been given, that there was no compromise whatever, and that the prince was at liberty to prosecute his suit; but, for his own part, he gave his support to the proposition, because the prince did not come forward as a claimant upon the public, but asserting a just demand. As to the idea of a compromise, there appeared in that nothing of a disgraceful kind. An adjustment, by way of composition, when no other mode could be devised, was fair and satisfactory. The measure now adopted was, without doubt, the shortest; for had the suit gone on, it would have been spun out to a most tedious and insufferable length. The late chancellor kept the papers in his pocket for six years before he could make up his opinion; and if the suit had been carried on, it must, no doubt, have partaken of that glorious uncertainty which was one of the excellencies of the British laws. If he conceived the ground rightly, upon which the right hon. the chancellor of the exchequer formed his motion, it was to be understood that the sum was to be appropriated in immediately enabling his royal highness to resume the state and splendour appropriate to his high rank. He wished to know whether the house was to understand this to be the real fact? If so, he should have much greater pleasure in supporting the motion? but he begged to know from the right hon. gentleman if he was warranted from any authentic quarter to give this assurance to the house; because if they voted the sum under such an idea, and that afterwards it should be found that the resumption of that state, on

the part of the prince, was to be still protracted, much discontent and disappointment must be the natural consequence. Nor could that minister be fairly understood to consult the honour of the prince, in deceiving the house into a vote, under an idea, that by such a vote his royal highness was to be immediately restored to his rank in life, when in reality he must remain under embarrassments that must still longer oblige him to remain in obscurity. But in all events, whatever the fact was, it ought to be fully understood. An hon. member had this night moved for the reading of some passages in his Majesty's message on a former occasion, respecting the prince's affairs, in order to prove that the prince was thereby precluded from any further claims upon parliament, because he was thereby constructively precluded from contracting any new debts. But although the letter of those passages certainly did not expressly restrict his royal highness from contracting debts, yet, he was ready to allow, his royal highness was as firmly bound in honour upon that point to abstain from contracting new debts, after the vote then passed, as if bound thereto by a condition worded in the strongest manner ! but the fact was, his royal highness had contracted no new debts ; nor had he made any claims on the public for payment of his former debts ; for surely the submittal to excessive restraints upon his own income for the liquidation of his royal highness's debts, was not to be termed a burthen on the country for that purpose. But though his royal highness had contracted no new debts, yet it was to be recollected, that if those arrangements made with a former chancellor of the exchequer for the liquidation of his debts, had failed in some instances of their intended effect, the prince, feeling himself bound in honour to make good the deficiency, was still embarrassed, under the sense of that honourable obligation. On the former occasion, a sum of £600,000 was voted in advance to the prince for the liquidation of his debts, to be vested in the hands of trustees ; but, when by public advertisement all the claims of his royal highness were called in, the aggregate was found to amount to £650,000 ; consequently there was a deficit of £50,000. It was not thought advisable to make a further application to parliament ; but the commissioners, to supply the deficiency, proposed to the creditors an abatement, on their respective debts, of no less than 10 per cent. This deduction was not upon claims

considered as any ways fraudulent or overcharged, but upon debts fairly tested, and admitted to be just and reasonable. This, he contended was, in direct terms, compromising the honour of his royal highness; it was not paying, but compounding his debts; and his royal highness, he said, had authorized him to declare, on a former occasion, that he had much rather again apply to parliament, and solicit a restriction of one year more upon his income, in order to pay in full every claim against him, than submit to a measure which his royal highness conceived to be so degrading to his honour; nor could he conceive that honour satisfied until he had paid the last farthing. If, then, his royal highness was still to remain burthened with claims, which he conceived himself bound, as debts of honour, to discharge, it was obvious the chief end proposed to the house, of enabling his royal highness immediately to resume his rank and appropriate splendour, would not be attained by the vote proposed. If it was said he was, in consequence of this vote, to be restored to his whole income, but not yet to resume his rank and state, in God's name let the circumstances be explained to the house; and some definitive time mentioned at which an expectation, so anxiously and so generally entertained by the nation, was really to be fulfilled.

The resolution was agreed to without a division.

MARCH 4.

PRINCE OF WALES'S ESTABLISHMENT.

Mr. Calcraft moved, "That the house, anxiously desirous to give full effect to the important objects contained in his Majesty's most gracious message of the 16th of February, do appoint a select committee to inquire into the embarrassments of the Prince of Wales, and into the most effectual means of relieving them as speedily as possible, in order to enable his Royal Highness to resume the splendour and dignity due to his exalted station."

MR. SHERIDAN, after the manner in which this question had been deprecated, and the manifest indisposition that had been shown on the other side to enter into it, thought it unnecessary to assure the house, that it was not his intention to detain them long. Unquestionably, if a division were to take place, he should vote for the original motion; but so little real difference of opinion did he see, that he could have no apprehension of

coming to a division. There was but one object professed on both sides, and he was sure the manner of attaining that object, though it might, in the first instance, strike gentlemen very differently, would not ultimately be a cause of dissension. From the tardiness of the right hon. gentleman (the chancellor of the exchequer) and those about him, to reply to the arguments of his right hon. friend (Mr. Fox), he had reason to conclude that they were ready to do that justice to his royal highness to which he is undoubtedly entitled. His royal highness, upon the gracious intention conceived by his Majesty, and communicated to the house by his Majesty's message, with the advice of his law officers, adopted the resolution of abandoning his claims to the duchy of Cornwall. There was no doubt but his royal highness's advisers, the one who had a seat in that house (Mr. Erskine), as well as the one who had not (Mr. Adam), had given his royal highness the advice most consistent with his dignity. But it was not for the house to consider that he did not act on the authority of private communications; he was bound as a member of parliament not to do so. Was there any reason to believe that his royal highness was indifferent to the restoration of his rank and state, or to the restoration to the same rank of that family which had shared in his obscurity? Let gentlemen look to the communication made by his royal highness, and they would there find it acknowledged that he was not indifferent. This was not information from private authority. The house had it from his royal highness himself; they had it on the face of their journals. All opinions were therefore agreed as to the object that was to be attained. His hon. friend, if the form of his motion produced any difficulty, would, he was sure, not hesitate to change it to the shape that would be least exceptionable. Let it be said, that the house would consider of it. The right hon. gentleman (the chancellor of the exchequer) had said, "his royal highness was in a situation in which it was not to be entertained that he should continue one hour longer; that he was in a situation in which he could not have that interchange of hospitality with the noble families of the country which it was most material that the heir apparent of the crown should keep up; that he could not promote the arts, patronise talent, or contribute to the advancement of those various laudable institutions for which the present time was so remarkable. The house appeared to feel

as the right hon. gentleman did ; but now, as something more was required to accomplish the object, was the feeling of the house and the right hon. gentleman to be altered ? We were told that those things must be endured for which there was no remedy ; but if there was a remedy, why should a great and confessed evil be longer endured ? His attention to this subject had lately led him to look over what had been done in it in former times. He had found in the former debates a great deal of asperity, which he was sorry to find mingled with such a discussion. He was pleased to find that nothing of that kind had entered into the present discussion, with the exception of one hon. gentleman (Mr. Johnstone), whose accuracy in figures had been complimented by the chancellor of the exchequer, though that accuracy had commenced in miscalculation, and ended in false inference. The hon. gentleman declared himself sorry that a compromise had taken place. He, on the contrary, rejoiced at it, because much disagreeable consequence might result from the prosecution of the suit, and the legal advisers of his royal highness would give no advice inconsistent with his honour. The hon. gentleman conceived it an insult to the public to suppose that there is any balance due to his royal highness on the arrears. He was as little inclined to insult the public as the hon. gentleman ; but he could not conceive the public so irritable as to fly into a rage at being called on to enter into an account on a matter in which the best informed persons were of opinion there was a large balance against it. He gave the public credit for more justice and less irritability than the hon. gentleman. The indelicacy of entering into such an account had also been mentioned. He knew of no indelicacy in it, except, indeed, in the set-offs which gentlemen made against the revenues of the duchy. Was the prince to be told by his royal father, “ It is true I owe you a large arrear, accumulated during your minority, but I have to deduct the expenses of your nursing and education ; there is so much for your cradle, and so much for your pap, and so much for your books.” The whole of the indelicacy was in this. The Prince of Wales had shared the same education and the same maintenance which had been enjoyed by the Duke of York. They were both maintained out of the queen’s privy purse, and it was on the occasion of that maintenance that parliament had made so large and liberal a grant for her Majesty’s

service. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Johnstone) said, "that the settlement made in 1795 ought not to be changed, and that there was no reason why it should not be continued in 1803." That may be a good argument, but it came rather late. It ought to have been advanced when the original grant on his Majesty's message was proposed. The hon. gentleman held his tongue then; and now, when his Majesty's message had recommended the object to the house, when the chancellor of the exchequer had stated that the object was so important and desirable as to admit of no delay, when the house assented to the principle, and seemed to feel no other objection to the measure proposed on it, than that it did not go far enough, the hon. gentleman came out with this argument, which went against the bill brought in on the resolution of the house in every stage. The hon. gentleman adduced a curious reason for not doing more now than was done in 1795. He said it was particularly necessary that the Prince of Wales should keep a greater state than in 1795, and have more trappings and lords of the bed-chamber, &c. because there was then a great number of jacobins in the country. Thus, sir, though we did not know it before, and I am afraid the doctrine will not find many adherents among us even now, the jacobins are the greatest supporters of the splendour of the royal family; and as we are told in the fable of the two owls perched on a ruin, who said to each other when the tyrant who caused the devastation passed by—"Long live King Mahmoud, for while he reigns we shall have plenty of ruined villages!" so our royal family should say, "Heaven send us plenty of jacobins, for they are the best support of our rank, and state, and dignity!" An hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Cartwright), and the worthy baronet near him (Sir Robert Buxton), said that the trappings were of no importance, that virtue was everything, and they deprecated the assumption of state and rank accordingly. He had no objection to this doctrine, if the system so early established, so invariably maintained, and handed down to us by our ancestors, was proved to be foolish. But let the rule be general, let not the splendour of one be curtailed, while that of another is extended. If, as a great man in this country (the late Earl of Chatham) had said, "Every feather of the royal bird aids his flight;" though he should not go to the length that noble lord did, in saying, that "when they drooped, or were

shed, the bird would fall to the ground ;” yet all should be cautiously preserved. In order to bring this contending system home to gentlemen’s minds, let it be applied to the house—let it be supposed that the speaker possessed sufficient dignity, and commanded sufficient respect by those virtues which it was acknowledged he possessed ; let the chair be removed, let the other badges be stripped off, let that bauble (the mace) be taken away, let the fine house that was building for him, in which he hoped he would soon entertain the members with his accustomed hospitality and splendour, be demolished ; let the state coach be laid down, and, instead of proceeding in it to St. James’s, attended by a grand procession of members in their private coaches, let him go on foot with the addresses, covered with a warm surtout, and honoured with the privilege of an umbrella in case of rain—(*loud bursts of laughter*). Let the judges be conducted by no sheriffs, or sheriffs’ attendants, to the assize towns ; let the chief justice go down in the mail coach, and the puisne judges content themselves with the travelling as outside passengers—(*a laugh*). Let the lord mayor, instead of coming to Westminster-hall in the state-barge, accompanied by the several companies in their state-barges,—let him come in a plain wherry, without any attendants, and instead of going back to feast on turtle at Guildhall, with the great officers of state and foreign ambassadors, let him content himself with stopping on his way back, and taking a beef-steak at Dolly’s chop-house—(*loud laughing*). It was not easy to have done without citing instances in which the abridgement of their happiness, which foreigners admire, but which, according to these gentlemen, are quite simple and unnecessary in the Prince of Wales, may be effected with great saving to the public. The Prince of Wales was not indifferent to the resumption of his rank ; he should be sorry if he was, as he should not then have the high opinion of him that he had. The house may, therefore, well go a step beyond ministers. It was no consideration that ministers had done what they had, nor even that the prince had abandoned his claims on the revenues of Cornwall in consequence. Let the house make its grant for the attainment of the object desired, without reference to any of these things. The debts contracted since 1795 might, it was true, be brought forward as debts which the Prince of Wales ought to acknowledge, but which he should be sorry to

make known. There would be that difference between money voted for these debts, and that voted on former occasions, that no person would claim it—(*a laugh*). There was the landgrave's debt also, unless it could be supposed that he, like those creditors, contrary to law, would fly from payment, except it was clandestine—(*a laugh*). It would, surely, have been much better for the commissioners, in the first instance, to have come to parliament for an additional grant, when the original sum was found insufficient, rather than strike off ten per cent. indiscriminately. It could hardly be surprising that his royal highness should now wish to make amends for their inconsiderate deduction. He would hardly be suspected of having any interested view in supporting this motion; and certainly he would not be suspected by those who recollect the declaration he made at that time. But he thought it a weak thing, after we had voted away £250,000,000 for the support of the thrones of Europe, an object in which we failed, we should not give £100,000 to maintain the dignity of our own, an object which we could not fail to accomplish.

Sir Robert Buxton moved the previous question, upon which the house divided; for the previous question 184; against it 139.

AUGUST 4.

DEFENCE AMENDMENT BILL.

MR. SHERIDAN ridiculed the hon. gentleman's (Mr. Wyndham) sarcasm on the public prints, observing that, in compliment to his friend (Mr. Cobbett), he probably preferred the weekly to the diurnal publications. He praised the readiness, zeal, and alacrity of the volunteer corps, and remarked, that, "with the exception of the regulars, there was not a corps in the kingdom on which the late secretary at war had not cast some degree of odium." He approved of this bill, because it encouraged volunteer exertions, and pointed out the station in which every man in the country ought to place himself. It had been stated by the right hon. gentleman, with respect to the general defence bill, that its object ought to have been to march companies to the army, and that their first destination was to be that of filling up the regiments of the line. He had spoken to gentlemen upon that subject, who thought that a nobleman, gentleman, trades-

man, or farmer, all of whom were liable to the operations of the act, if they did not volunteer, would be very much surprised to find themselves, perhaps in the course of a month, in a private regiment, and liable to be tied up to the halberts. It was impossible for any man to make a comparison between the volunteers and those who were drilled on compulsion. Could the latter be compared with those patriotic volunteers who were sacrificing their time in perfecting themselves in their exercise? Look at the St. George's and the Westminster volunteers, who most likely might at this moment, be seen exercising in the hall. But the hon. gentleman had said, "he disliked that spirit of aristocracy in towns and villages which it was the tendency of the bill to introduce." He denied that it would have any such effect. The only effect of the bill was that of allowing persons to volunteer, instead of being compelled to serve. They were not obliged to wear an uniform. If in villages they voluntarily came forward without uniform, they were exempted from the operation of the general defence bill. In large towns, such as Birmingham, Sheffield, and Nottingham, he should prefer associations of the higher classes, and in the country and villages those of the lower. He was satisfied with the power this bill gave his Majesty, with regard to the acceptance of volunteer services. We ought not to stop while anything was left to be done. We should look forward to the possibility of the most disastrous calamities, and disgraceful events, again occurring. The state of Ireland was such, that although every man must rejoice at its present security, we ought not to calculate on its remaining free from disturbance. It was absolutely necessary that Ireland should not be separated from this country. It might, perhaps, be necessary that the whole of our disposable force should be employed for the purpose of retaining Ireland. Upon the whole, he saw no objections to the alterations proposed by this bill; but, on the contrary, thought it a proper extension of the system of volunteer service. (Mr. Sheridan delivered his speech from the treasury bench.)

Mr. Wyndham answered Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan, in reply to the observations that he was a new convert, asked the hon. gentleman whether it was a new situation for him to come forward and state his opinion when the country was in danger? Did he call out, like the hon. gentleman, "re-

store me and my friends to power, or the country cannot be saved?" Was it new to him to be an advocate in the cause of the country? The hon. gentleman had accused him of firing his musket too soon; he had, however, returned the fire. He ought to apologise to his Majesty's ministers for the danger into which he had brought them; but though the hon. gentleman had fired his musket, he had forgot to put ball in it. The hon. gentleman commanded a fine piece of artillery, which was formidable whenever he had recourse to it; but he was so fond of squibs and crackers, that he seldom did any execution. It was not long since the hon. gentleman had stated, that there was no spirit in the country, and that the journals lagged in rousing its energies. Would he have had these bills brought in at that time? He had said "the people of England were a degraded, base, and lost people." Was that the time for bringing forward such a measure? No, it was more likely to be attended with effect, by having been brought forward after the spirit of the people had been excited. With regard to that clattering and race-course bustle the hon. gentleman had described, he was glad to hear that noise of the machinery of the bill, but it was with regret he had heard the hon. gentleman speak of it with disgust and rebuke. The hon. gentleman had called the placards of the enemy "paper bullets," and had said, "what a time for Buonaparte to come!" It was to be hoped he would not come the sooner in consequence of what the hon. gentleman had said, but if he did, he would find that the measures adopted by ministers had already produced an army of one hundred thousand volunteers. The hon. gentleman regretted the measure had not been brought forward sooner, but he could have no substantial reason for his regret, except that he would have had three times as many opportunities of abusing ministers. His system had been a system of discouragement, which, if it had been followed, would have led the country to despair, and prostrate itself at the feet of its enemy. He had said that there was no salvation for the country, except by a particular individual being minister; that the country had nothing to fight for; that, after the disgraceful treaty of Amiens, the country had received, on the part of honour, kicks innumerable; that it had nothing like glory or honour for which to contend. This was one of his modes of discouragement. The next was to lay down by most laborious

demonstration, that no irregular force could contend with the regular. That with such a force as we had, it was impossible to resist such a force as the enemy could bring against us. The next was, that nothing could be done for the country till the present ministers were out—that they were an incubus, a night-mare—and that the more that was given them, the worse they were. He then referred to what he described as the hon. gentleman's silly panegyric upon Mr. Cobbett, and the erection of a statue of gold to his honour. (Here Mr. Wyndham said something in a low tone of voice.) Mr. Sheridan continued. The hon. gentleman, he said, seemed to mutter at this; nay, he groaned; he was glad to hear him groan. However, he hoped he would go on with his statue of gold, and make a colossal statue; but he advised him not to solicit subscriptions at the Royal Exchange; it was not likely he would be very successful there; for, he believed, in one of that gentleman's papers, he had observed, that the stocks could not exist if the monarchy existed. It was not very probable that the writer of such a sentiment would be very popular in that wealthy city where, only, any subscriptions could be raised with effect.

AUGUST 10.

VOLUNTEERS.

MR. SHERIDAN rose to make his promised motion relative to the volunteers. He began by reminding the house that, when he first gave notice of the motion, he had stated his conviction that it was of a nature which could give rise to no opposition. In now rising to bring it forward, he was not less sanguine that it would be unanimously adopted. It was of a nature which he flattered himself would meet the approbation of every man in the house, however different his opinions on general subjects of policy.—(At this time Mr. Wyndham and some of his friends entered the house.) The hon. member, with peculiar good humour, alluded to the circumstance; and, however difficult he thought the task, he was not without hope that even these hon. members would give their assent to the motion. He trusted that, whatever zeal of opposition had been manifested on other occasions, there might, at least, be one cordial day before their separation—one day in which every consideration was lost sight of but devotion

to the cause of our common country. It might, perhaps, be thought by some persons, that the motion which he was now about to submit to the house would have come with more propriety from one in an ostensible situation—from a member of his Majesty's executive government. In bringing forward the motion, he certainly had no wish to interfere with what more strictly was the duty of the servants of the crown, but he could not but think that motion, such as he had to propose, was one which came with peculiar propriety from an individual who appeared in that house as a volunteer in the cause of his country. It might not possess equal authority, but he was sure it would not be inferior in honesty and sincerity. In the few words which he had to offer, before he submitted the motion to the consideration of the house, he should carefully abstain from every topic on which a diversity of opinion might arise, conscious as he was that some gentlemen (looking to the bench on which Mr. Wyndham and his friends were seated) were never backward in availing themselves of opportunities for starting grounds of opposition. Before he proceeded further, he wished it to be distinctly understood that his motion was intended to include every description of individuals whose services were voluntarily offered at this difficult and trying crisis. It would include volunteer corps, corps of yeomanry, and corps which were raised by patriotic gentlemen, and accepted by government. He thought it necessary thus far to explain the object of his motion, to prevent any misconception or misapprehension, from whatever quarter it might proceed. There were one or two points on which, before he handed the motion to the chair, he wished to say a very few words. At present there existed some degree of doubt respecting the proper construction of the clauses of the bill for the general defence of the country; and also of the bill by which some ambiguities were meant to be removed. It was not sufficiently understood how far a voluntary offer to enter into a corps, previously accepted by his Majesty, would exempt the individuals making this offer from the compulsory operations of the bills to which he had just now referred. He thought it the more necessary to call the attention of the house to this subject, in consequence of a circular letter from a noble secretary of state (Lord Hobart), in which it appeared to him that the noble lord had, to a certain degree, put a false construction on the act. After such an authority as this had

been published, it was essential that the public at large should have a thorough conception of the meaning of the legislature. He stated, from communications on which he could place the greatest reliance, that in Hampshire particularly, the greatest embarrassment prevailed. If the interpretation of the noble lord was to be considered as decisive, then a power would be left to the constables of the different districts to call on individuals to comply with the compulsory clause of the act, after they had entered into a voluntary corps, whose services had been regularly accepted by his Majesty's ministers. Nothing, however, could be more clear than this, that such was not the view of the legislature. It was the clear spirit of the act, and he was anxious that it should be unequivocally understood, that when any individual entered into a corps of the nature which he had described, he was henceforth freed from the operation of all the compulsory clauses of the act. The next point on which he wished to make a few observations, was the mode in which many volunteer associations conducted their clothing. He was well aware—and it could not have escaped the notice of many other gentlemen—that many thousand individuals, whose loyalty was undoubted, whose ardour to come forward in the sacred cause in which we are now engaged is indisputable, were prevented from entering into volunteer associations, from the heavy expense to which a gaudy, fashionable dress, calculated merely to gratify the silly vanity of some persons who were too opulent to feel the pressure, would expose them. They had every wish to appear in the ranks of their fellow-countrymen, in defence of their sovereign and their country, but they could not, without the greatest inconvenience to their families, incur the expense which such dresses necessarily incurred. If the clothing were more cheap, he was sure that thousands, whom no consideration but that which he had mentioned now deterred, would flock to the standard of loyalty. He could but think that gentlemen in affluent circumstances, and who had no reason to think of the expense in the choice of a dress, would do themselves infinite honour by appearing in the plainest dress possible. No man was surely, at a period like this, when the greatest virtues were called forth, to pride himself in the ranks of a volunteer association on the richness and costliness of his dress. We were not to turn our attention to external decorations, but to place our confidence in the heart which

they covered. It was not idle pomp or tawdry magnificence which was to entitle members of a volunteer association to the confidence of their country. In this great and trying crisis, we were to look for salvation to fortitude, to heroism, to contempt of death.—(This part of the speech was loudly applauded from all parts of the house.)—Passing from this point, the hon. gentleman next adverted to another subject, on which he insisted with a good deal of energy. He was glad to see that the spirit of the country was now roused, but he wished that this spirit should manifest itself by unequivocal signs. He rejoiced to find that a military disposition pervaded the land, and he wished that the effect of this military disposition might be visible in the general military appearance in the country. In Ireland, when the system of volunteers, carried to an extraordinary pitch, left a greater proportion of the regular troops disposable for foreign service, every man in every part of the country was to be seen in his uniform. When he said this, he believed he spoke in the hearing of some gentlemen who had witnessed the scene, and the impression which it produced. At that period, every man in the Irish house of commons appeared in the dress of his appropriate association. It might not, perhaps, be regular in him to allude to the gallery of that house; but, he might just say, that the gallery exhibited an equal military appearance. The public officers of state imitated the example, and even the grave judges on the bench were unwilling to call a counsel, unless under his professional gown he exhibited a uniform. He could not but think that the adoption of a similar practice now would be productive of the most beneficial effects in keeping alive that ardour which, fortunately for the country, had now began to kindle in every loyal heart. Even if it had no other effect but to point out those who were lukewarm and disaffected at this moment, when the loyalty of all was put to the test, he thought that it might be productive of infinite advantage. As to the space where volunteer associations were to be trained, he begged leave to offer a very few words. It was his opinion that the places allotted for this purpose should, in the first instance, be as secluded as possible. Till a certain degree of progress was made in discipline, it was, in every point of view, desirable to be separated from the observation of a promiscuous multitude. He needed not to remind the house that there were many individuals to whom, under such circumstances, the

stare of a vulgar multitude would produce the most unpleasant sensations. There were men who would much more cheerfully expose themselves to the shot of the enemy, than encounter the derision of motley spectators. He was at all times happy to hear of any facilities being given for this separate exercise. He mentioned, to the honour of his Grace the Duke of Portland, that he had given up the space before his house for the use of a volunteer association. There was another place, called, he believed, Lord's Cricket Ground, hired for a similar purpose at an enormous expense, and at the same time unattended with the advantages of privacy. He was informed that the owners of this place, after exacting this inordinate price, were in the habit of admitting boys and other idle spectators, at the rate of sixpence each. He felt indignant at such unjust and exorbitant extortion, and he did not think that government would be stepping beyond the bounds of their just authority, if they insisted on the proprietors of such grounds giving them up for the use of volunteer associations on receiving a fair and reasonable compensation. These were the general points to which he wished to call the attention of the house. Before he sat down, he begged leave to advert to some other considerations connected, though not in so intimate a manner, with the subject immediately before the house. No man had seen with greater pleasure than he had, the noble, patriotic, generous donations of which the gentlemen at Lloyd's Coffee-house had set so illustrious an example in the city. He confessed that, liberal as the subscription already was, it was with surprise that he still observed the absence of several classes of the community which he expected to have seen the first on the list. He had no wish to say anything harsh respecting the noble and honourable persons of whom those classes were composed. Though they had not yet come forward with their contributions, he had no doubt that they would not be deficient in devotion to their country at this trying moment; and that, though they had not taken the lead, they would not show themselves deficient in generosity in so sacred a cause. When he looked at the amount of the fund at this moment, and when he considered how much greater it might eventually become by the contributions of those classes to which he had referred, much as he admired the object to which it was originally appropriated, he could not help thinking that it might admit of a more extended

application. Though originally designed solely for the humane and generous purpose of affording aid to the wives, to the orphans, and the relatives of those who perished while fighting their country's battles, it did appear to him, that so large a fund, instead of remaining now unapplied, might, to a certain extent, be employed in contributing to a direct service of the country. Rewards might be offered to those who were now willing to volunteer the performance of important national services, and who might be deterred merely by the consideration that, in their absence, their families would remain without a provision. He did not mean to press this subject further at present, but thought it his duty to throw out these hints for the consideration of those to whom was committed the management and appropriation of the fund. He would, he hoped, be forgiven, if he alluded to another source of assistance, the beneficial effects of which had been so liberally experienced during the last war. He meant to allude to the patriotic contributions of our fair countrywomen. In such a contest as this in which we were now engaged, involving the preservation of all the charities and all the endearments of domestic life, he could not allow himself to believe, that they would be backward in the display of their patriotism. To their other charms he was confident they would add the charm of love to their country and their homes. The hon. gentleman having gone through these topics, proceeded to advert to the description of the force, to the individuals composing which his vote of thanks would be addressed. On this part of the subject he had no sort of desire to enter into any military details. He was no military man, and professed no power to give the house information on the subject. In the course of many discussions which had lately taken place, it had, however, frequently occurred to him, that many of these details might have been very well spared, whether proceeding from military or unmilitary members of the house. He must, in the face of authorities deservedly high in a military point of view, be permitted to say that, as a constitutional member of parliament, he thought the force which was now formed for the defence of the country, one in which he felt himself fully warranted in placing the amplest confidence. Military men were too apt to view every object with what they were pleased to call a military eye; but with all their minuteness of observation they were very apt to overlook

one little fortress, which he should never cease to think of the highest importance, and that was the fortress of the constitution. If he were asked, whether he did not think 100,000 regular troops a more effectual body for the defence of the country than an equal number of militia, volunteers, and yeomanry, he certainly could have no difficulty in giving his answer. Undoubtedly, for every military purpose, such a regular force was superior. He would maintain, however, that in addition to a regular army of a certain magnitude, a force, consisting of militia, volunteers, and yeomanry, was a force more suited to the habits, to the circumstances, to the constitutional liberties of this country. In saying this, he did not speak of an army for the purpose of carrying on a continental war, but a force such as it behoved us to keep up when the necessity of cultivating military habits was more imperiously imposed on us by the ambition and the malignity of a foreign enemy, whom nothing could satisfy short of our destruction. He liked the force the better, because it was of a diversified character. In the first instance, the preference was to be given to the regular troops; the militia, the volunteer corps, and the yeomanry, succeeded in their claims to distinction. There was in such a force a connection which must ever make it formidable to a foreign enemy. There was in its composition a facility for separation, which, in a constitutional view, he should always regard with satisfaction. Great standing armies, however disciplined and powerful, were not to be implicitly trusted. He might refer to numerous examples in proof of this position. A most striking instance occurred in the army of France. Never was there an army better disciplined, more brave, or apparently more dependent on the throne; but that army, thus constituted, and on which every reliance was placed, in the course of a few hours suffered the monarchy to be overthrown, and the revolution to triumph. In making this allusion, it was the farthest in the world from his intention to impeach the loyalty of our regular army. On the contrary, he believed that no body of men were ever animated with truer or more affectionate attachment to their sovereign. He admired, however, the present constitution of our military force, as being exempted from the inconveniencies and the evils which attached to a certain degree to all standing, exclusive, permanent armies. By such a constitution, the strength and efficiency of the whole was con-

firmed and consolidated. He liked the present attitude of the country, whether we looked forward to the continuance of war, or to the conclusion of peace. On the subject of peace he should just say one word. He should be the ready advocate of peace, if it could be obtained on terms consistent with the national honour and safety. This, however, he would distinctly say, and he was sure that he spoke the language of his Majesty's ministers when he made the declaration, that no peace could be formed, no negotiation could be listened to, no offer for negotiation could be accepted, while there was a hostile army in any part of the united empire. If he had supposed it possible for ministers to have entertained contrary sentiments, he should have felt it his duty to have brought forward a distinct proposition, that the minister who should listen to so disgraceful a proposition would deserve to be impeached, and to lose his head as the punishment of his infamy. He stated it distinctly, therefore, as what he conceived was the unalterable resolution of ministers, that no proposal for peace should be entertained, while a single French soldier had a footing on British ground.—(This sentiment was universally applauded.) The hon. gentleman, after this patriotic effusion, went on to recommend unanimity on this interesting occasion. He did not call on gentlemen to give up their opinions. He did not wish, by any means, to dictate to them the course of political conduct which they were to pursue. Within the walls of that house every man had a fair right fully and unequivocally to declare his opinion on public affairs. He might be permitted, however, to entreat of gentlemen that, as the period of their separation was now at hand, they would not utter such sentiments out of doors; that they would not resort to any measures which could damp the increasing ardour and energy of the country; that they would not lend the sanction of their names to sentiments which, coming from unauthorised sources, had never been received with any portion of favour. All that he asked of them was, to suspend their political animosities for a moment; not to represent the servants of the crown as weak and inefficient, at a moment when confidence in their exertions was so necessary to the salvation of the country; not to waste that time and those talents in party spirit and intrigue, which might be so much more worthily employed in performing the sublime and animated duties of patriotism. This was a moment which called on every

honest man to unite heart and hand in support of all that is dear to us as a great and free people, against the greatest danger with which we were ever threatened. It was not, surely, asking too much of hon. gentlemen to ask them, during the short recess of parliament, to suspend all pleasures, to relinquish all pursuits of secondary importance, and to think only of the great cause which interested all minds and attracted all hearts. Surely their party spirit was not so violent, their hostility to ministers was not so virulent as at all to come in competition with the great object of saving the country, which they uniformly declared was the first object of their regard. In that short interval, properly employed, much important service might be rendered to the country. Much might be done in giving a proper direction to that spirit of patriotism which now, fortunately, pervaded every part of the empire. Let but this small sacrifice be made to patriotism, and, when they once more assembled in that house, they might again resume their favourite pursuits, under the pleasing consciousness that they had contributed their efforts to the general safety, that the patriotism of the people at large had at length secured us against enemies however malignant, and dangers however formidable. The hon. gentleman, in conclusion, declined occupying the time of the house by any arguments in support of his motion. The zeal, the fortitude, the promptitude, with which the volunteer associations had obeyed the call of their country in the hour of her danger, could never be sufficiently admired. He would not expatiate on their conduct—he would leave it without comment to the honest unbiassed feelings of the house. He then moved—

“That the thanks of this house be given to the volunteer and yeomanry corps, for the zeal and promptitude with which they associated for the defence of the country, in this important and dangerous crisis.”

He also moved—

“That a return of the volunteer corps be laid before the house, in order that they may be handed down to posterity, by being entered on the journals.”

General Gascoyne seconded the motion. A debate ensued.

Mr. Sheridan rose to reply, and spoke in nearly the following terms:—By the courtesy of this house, any member who brings forward a motion is allowed the right of replying to any argu-

ments which may be offered against it ; but of this right I should not on this occasion avail myself, if it were not for the very direct personal allusions which have been made to me in the course of the debate. I confess that I feel great surprise, that the appeal I have thought it my duty to make to the house, for a vote of thanks to those gallant men who have stood forward so gallantly in defence of all that is dear to us, should have provoked a dissentient voice, or produced a discussion of such length—now not less than five or six hours. This hesitation was not less surprising than impolitic ; but the conduct of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wyndham) did not by any means surprise me. That the man who required twenty-four hours to consider of the propriety of putting down rebellion in Ireland, should waste five or six hours in investigating the policy of declaring our gratitude and admiration of the loyalty and exertions of those who stood forward to protect their country in the time of peril, was perfectly consistent ; that he should have been seconded, however, by the gallant officer behind him, was rather a matter of astonishment. But before I proceed to remark on the observations of both those gentlemen, I must take notice of the appeal which has been made to me by an hon. friend of mine, namely, whether, before I consented to give my support to ministers, I had obtained satisfaction from them upon two points, and made those the conditions of my support ; first, as to the appointment of a council of war which I supported the other night, upon the motion of another hon. friend of mine. With regard to this measure I confess that though, on the occasion to which I have alluded, I strongly advised its adoption ; I have, in consequence of information I received from the very highest authority, had my objection very materially shaken, if not altogether removed : for from this authority I have heard such arguments as completely satisfied my mind that the establishment of this commission would not only be attended with disadvantage, but be seriously injurious ; I therefore am ready very fully and frankly to declare that the sentiments I held upon this subject were erroneous.

The other point to which my hon. friend referred, but not quite in the friendly tone in which he has been in the habit of addressing himself to me, was with respect to the offer of service from his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. That, however, is a subject of delicacy into the discussion of which I shall not

enter. I believe there is no man who knows me will doubt, for an instant, the respect, attachment, and veneration I entertain for the virtues and public spirit of that illustrious personage; but I am not to be tutored or schooled by any man as to the way in which I should manifest my feelings and discharge my duty towards his royal highness. I am not to be told, that unless the offer, which has done him the highest honour, shall be treated in a manner satisfactory to my hon. friend and me, I shall decline to support his Majesty's government on this trying occasion. Of my respect and regard for his royal highness as a prince, and as a man, I should think my hon. friend himself fully aware. It is not necessary for me to make any parade or profession of my zealous wishes for his interest or character. It is justly due to that character, to state that which must constitute its highest praise, that he has offered, in the noblest manner, to stand forward for the nation's defence; and I am fully persuaded that that offer was not less graciously received by the persons to whom it was made, than it is felt with gratitude by the country at large. I am, however, confident, that whatever might have been the effect of that offer, his royal highness would not be friendly to any observations calculated to excite public discontent, or to disturb public unanimity; on the contrary, I am fully persuaded, that, according to the sentiment of his dignified friend, Lord Moira, his royal highness would rather enter as a private in the ranks of his armed countrymen, than countenance any discussion which could tend to divide the feelings of the people. With respect to the remarks of the hon. officer, upon the manner in which military lectures are received in this house, I must set the hon. gentleman right, if he alluded to me. I beg him to understand, that I never did say that this house was not a proper place for military men to state their opinions; but I did say this, that as a member of parliament I would not abandon my opinion in compliment to the assertions of military authority, for which, generally speaking, I profess not to entertain a very profound respect, at least, so far as it is displayed in this house; and indeed it would be rather surprising if, from the manner pursued, such authority should be much respected. I can collect no information from it. One officer rises and lays down a certain plan; another proposes one of quite a different nature, but neither follows up his ideas. There is a kind of

confusion and irregularity in their movements. They do not march close upon each other with the *lock step*, but they run about, and scramble in such a way as to be scarcely intelligible, of very little use, and not at all tending to elucidate the subject, or to enlighten the house. The hon. officer to whom I refer tells, to be sure, some military anecdotes, with which any man that has read some very well-known books, cannot be unacquainted; and another hon. officer at times entertains us in the same way. But of what value to the house is the repetition of those matters of fact? If these gallant officers can tell us nothing more than what can be seen in Plutarch's *Lives*, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, or *Vaughan*; or how such a division moved at *Malplaquet* or *Blenheim*, they can render very little service to the country. Indeed, for the credit of these officers themselves, I deprecate such discussions, and would advise them to abstain from such statements. But, as to the motion before the house, the hon. colonel asks, why thank the volunteers for merely doing their duty? His new acquaintance and right hon. friend below him ought, however, to be the last to oppose a motion of thanks to them for doing their duty; he who has been so long and so loudly lamenting the base spirit which, according to his description, existed in the country, in consequence of the treaty of *Amiens*, and the character of the present ministers. If the right hon. gentleman did really wish to remove that lowness of mind which he so often deplored, his language this night was strange indeed; but if he regretted to find his opinion mistaken, it is of course quite consistent to resist the expression of our gratitude to the band of patriots who have broken through that slumber of apathy, and shook off that shade of despondency which he has so frequently pictured to the house, but which, in reality, never existed. The hon. colonel has described the motives which ought to actuate the people of this country to take up arms at present, and he contends that their having obeyed those motives, namely, the defence of their own families, and the call of public duty does not entitle them to the gratitude of parliament. I regret that the hon. colonel has, in the course of his observations, entered into any contrast between the volunteers and any other description of the public force. Such comparisons are invidious at any time, and particularly imprudent at present; I can see no good purpose it can answer. Although the wisdom of the hon.

colonel's right hon. friend (Mr. W.) has given the sanction of his authority to the practice, I did flatter myself that, in the observations with which I prefaced this motion, I had abstained from every topic that was likely to provoke debate or dissension, and that was my wish. I declined to say one word as to the conduct of ministers, because I knew, from the experience of a former evening, that anything from me, in commendation of ministers, would be a pretext to the right hon. gentleman to fall foul of them. Recurring to the comparison of the hon. colonel between the volunteers and the regulars, I cannot help saying that he has not taken a course very likely to reflect honour on his favourite force. The hon. colonel has admitted that the volunteers have done their duty, but that they are not on that account entitled to the proposed vote, while the distinguished services of the regular army are overlooked. In proof of their services, however, the hon. colonel states this, that at the time of the mutiny in the fleet, the jacobins sent circulars to the several regiments of the army, inviting them to mutiny, which invitations they refused to comply with. Then the hon. gentleman's argument stands thus—that we should refuse our thanks to the volunteers, whose merit is that they have done their duty, but that we should grant this honour to the regular army, whose merit is, according to his statement, that they rejected a proposition to mutiny; that they declined to violate their oaths—to abandon every sense of duty and honour. Such is the substance of the panegyric which this regular colonel has pronounced upon the regular army. If he can say nothing more in their favour, I think the army would be much obliged to him to withhold his praise. The hon. colonel has, in his compliments to his right hon. friend, thought proper to say, that it would be for my interest to preserve my hands as clean from the imputation of unworthy motives, in my opposition to ministers, as his right hon. friend has done and continues to do. If the hon. colonel has been acquainted with the views and proceedings of the old opposition, he would have declined that remark: but I will refer him for information upon this point to his right hon. friend, and I would call with confidence upon that right hon. gentleman myself to state the course which the old opposition took when he acted with them. Were not the grounds upon which they rested their conduct materially different from those upon which he and

his colleagues now act? When they condemned ministers, they pointed at the particular acts which justified that condemnation. They never pronounced loose and general censures. They never told the country that the ministers they opposed were not entitled to confidence without proving it; but the right hon. gentleman never does meet the ministers fairly, never opposes them front to front; his mode of discipline seems best to qualify him for squibs and skirmishes; his favourite plan of attack is on the flanks and rear of his adversary. Is this the system of tactics which the hon. colonel could approve? I would call upon the right hon. gentleman to make his approaches more manfully. If he would consult the precedent of the old opposition, he would alter his present course for one better adapted to recommend himself to the favour of the country and the deference of parliament. I am glad, however, to perceive from the reference he has made to the old opposition, that he is refreshing his arms, no doubt from an expectation, in which I hope he will not be disappointed, that he will have to stand a very long campaign in opposition. If, in this campaign he will endeavour to imitate the party I have alluded to, he will protect himself and his friends from the charge of faction; he will not oppose measures because they come from a certain set of men, although the same measures from other men would meet his most cordial concurrence; he will not act upon such motives, and if not, his opinion and opposition will become respectable, and may have some pretension to a comparison with the old opposition, from which the right hon. gentleman may think I have now a furlough; but, as to the comparison of the two oppositions under the present circumstances, it strikes me that the old opposition might address that of the right hon. gentleman in the same terms as those used by the landlord who kept the sign of the Two Magpies, at Hounslow, in his dispute with another landlord who thought proper to put up the same sign—"We are the real old magpies, and you have set up your new opposition through spite." [A general laugh.] The hon. colonel, in his affection and deference for the Prince of Wales, recommended that his royal highness should be appointed to the command of the *levy en masse* as a place suited to his rank and consequence. I would beg the house to recollect that this is the army which the hon. officer advised ministers to distribute into scouring parties, or to stay in their respective districts, to

keep up a kind of irregular attack upon the enemy—to fire from behind hedges or walls—from out of houses, &c. Now mark the station the hon. colonel would assign the illustrious personage I have mentioned—he would send his royal highness to take his place behind a tree, to watch and direct flying shooters, to conduct a mode of warfare that would resemble something like bear-hunting. This is a part which I hope will never be assigned to the Prince of Wales; that we shall not call on him to stand behind a tree, or throw himself into a ditch when the enemy approaches. An hon. friend of mine has stated, in the course of his objections to the motion before the house, that while the volunteers were drilling, they were laughed at by idle, worthless spectators. This appears to me to be a very strong reason in favour of this motion; for if the volunteers are laughed at by the profligate, let them have this honourable mark of your approbation to gratify their pride—to raise them above such sneers. The late secretary at war has maintained in the course of this debate, and on other occasions, that our situation was by no means so dangerous at any period of the late war, as it is at present. To this assertion the noble secretary of state has so ably answered, that I think it unnecessary to say much, but I insist that the perils of the country in the year 1798, were much superior to those by which we are now menaced; for at that time Ireland was actually invaded; a formidable insurrection prevailed; and had the whole of the French force which was sent to Ireland been able to effect a landing, or rather, perhaps, were it not for the treachery of Hoche, that country would have been subdued. Then I contend that Ireland was saved by an accident; and if the 40,000 men which were permitted to go to Egypt had bent their course to Ireland, what, I would ask, could have been the fate of that country? In such a state of things, I maintain that ministers are justified in charging the right hon. gentleman with neglecting to resort to such measures of vigour as he ought to have employed, and such as have been on the present occasion adopted. The right hon. gentleman will not deny that he felt the extremity of panic at the state of the nation in 1798, insomuch that he was heard to complain of the apathy of his colleagues; that they were not forward to adopt measures sufficiently suited to the crisis. They were, to be sure, persuaded to propose a bill, which was passed, in the preamble

of which the alarming state of the country was acknowledged, and several military preparations prescribed, which, however, were never executed, nor was the act, in any of its provisions, acted upon ; but yet it was remarkable, that though clumsy and ineffectual, it contained the same principle and nearly the same clauses, which the right hon. gentleman has objected to in the act for raising the mass of the people. Why did the right hon. gentleman approve of a proposition then, which he abuses now. There are indeed many other measures of the late ministry which the right hon. gentleman professes to condemn. He has said, among others, that the provisional cavalry was a foolish measure—how then can he account for the support he gave it as a minister ? I do appeal to him, or any other man who has a spark of frankness, whether such conduct is excusable ! that of a right hon. gentleman, who lays claim to a character for candour, sincerity, openness, and independence of mind, who continued in this house to plead for proceedings, of which, as a cabinet minister, he strongly disapproved, was certainly not quite consistent. The hon. colonel says, that Austria was not sincerely desirous to preserve the peace of Campo Formio. I remember when we stated the same thing in this house we were opposed by the late secretary at war and his friends, and the fact was positively denied. The ex-secretary at war considered the assertion mere nonsense—indeed, that right hon. gentleman, whether in or out of office, has always been in the habit of treating the assertions or arguments of his adversaries with an appearance of indifference, if not contempt, that was not becoming in any man. No doubt, if great talents would justify a man in looking down upon the arguments of his adversary, the hon. gentleman was fully qualified to do so ; but no degree or description of talents could excuse such conduct. The argument of every man is, if at all attended to, entitled to respectful attention. With regard to the conduct of the right hon. gentleman, since he became an ex-minister, I do contend, that its uniform tenor has been to invite and encourage the enemy, and to depress and discourage our own people. He has invited the enemy to provoke the war, by the description he always gave of the character of ministers—and since the war he has invited an attack upon our country, by the statements he has made of the situation of the public mind, the disorganized state of our army, and the awkward manner in

which our defensive force was to be constructed. By this kind of invitation he has brought Buonaparte into a scrape, and he certainly is in a much worse scrape than this country ; all his misfortunes may be attributed to the reliance he placed on the words of the right hon. gentleman, when he reported the ministers to be a set of shabby, pusillanimous, incapable fellows, who knew nothing, who would bear anything, who would submit to any injury, or endure any insult. In short, that the peace of Amiens was a curse, and that, bad as the ministers were, this treaty had rendered the people still worse. He always stated that ministers were only anxious for the safe tenure of their places, and that as there was nothing high-minded about them, they would make any sacrifice to that object. What was the natural tendency of such language? What impression was it likely to make on the mind of Buonaparte? If he were told that it was always rant, the mere heated declamation of a discontented ex-minister, he would, no doubt, answer “ No—impossible ! Mr. Wyndham is a discreet statesman, and he knows the character of the English government, and of the English people, well ; no man better.” But Buonaparte was deceived, and was suffering much regret for his confidence in the right hon. gentleman. He knows now that ministers are not quite so passive or so timid as the right hon. gentleman would lead him to imagine ; that they would go to war sooner than sacrifice the honour and interests of the country. There is a character in our great bard, *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*, to whom, though I cannot entirely compare the first consul, I have no doubt, that if he were to declare his sentiments on his present situation, he would say, in the language of the old knight,—“ If I thought he’d been so valiant, I’d be damned ere I had challenged him.”

I am pretty certain that such is now the feeling of Buonaparte, and he has to thank the right hon. gentleman for reducing him to that dilemma. I hope that ministers will place him in a still worse dilemma ; if duly seconded by the people, upon which I confidently rely, I have no doubt that it is in their power to do so. In reply to the observations that have been made on the motion under consideration, on the ground that it is not necessary, I shall only say that it must be useful ; that it is dictated by justice and policy, and called for by the irresistible voice of gratitude ; that the merit it is intended to distinguish is great

and material to the public safety, and that to record such merit would excite the emulation of the people at large, if a stimulus were necessary, while it would form a monument honourable to our own character, grateful to the pride, and conducive, by the influence of example, to the best interests of posterity. The hon. gentleman concluded with submitting his motion for thanks, &c.

Colonel Crauford made a few observations in reply, which were merely explanatory of his speech.

The question was then put upon Mr. Sheridan's motion, and carried nem. con.

Mr. Sheridan next moved, "That the speaker do signify to the lords lieutenants of counties, &c. the assent of the house to the above resolution."

Agreed to nem. con.

Mr. Sheridan finally moved, "That a return be made and entered upon the Journals, of the names and number of the volunteer corps, who, from the present moment till the next meeting of parliament, should enrol themselves and be accepted by his Majesty, in order that their patriotic example may be handed down to animate our latest posterity."

Agreed to nem. con.

MARCH 15, 1804.

STATE OF THE NAVAL DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

Mr. Pitt moved for an address to his Majesty, "Praying, that he will be pleased to give orders for laying before the house, an amount of all the ships of the line, fifty-gun ships, frigates, sloops, gun-brigs, and other vessels actually in commission in the years ending the 31st of December, 1793, 1801, and 1803."

MR. SHERIDAN said, it was my intention, sir, to wait until I should hear the opinions of professional men on this subject, but the observations which have been made by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) who has just sat down, urge me to obtrude myself on your notice thus prematurely, and contrary to my original intention. The hon. gentleman has, in my mind, used observations the most unwarrantable, on parliamentary grounds, I have ever heard in this house. He has stated, that he has never had conversation with any naval officer whose opinion has not been decidedly in contradiction to the system upon which the naval affairs of the country have been for some time back conducted; that is to say, since the gallant admiral who now presides at the

head of the admiralty board, was appointed to that high station ; and this information, so obtained, he offers to the house as justification for the censure which the advocates for the motion before the house would attach to the character of the noble lord at the head of the admiralty. The hon. gentleman ventures to tell the house, that upon grounds such as these, there is a sufficient reason for the inquiry, and for granting the papers required ; but from whom has the hon. gentleman obtained the intelligence, and heard the sentiments to which he thinks the house ought to attach so much importance ? From officers, no doubt, who are ashore and unemployed ; from those who have not the best opportunity of judging, and whose judgment, for many reasons, is not entitled to the first attention : but not from such officers as those whom the house had heard this night ; not from such as the gallant admiral who preceded the hon. gentleman to whom I am now alluding, and who has attracted my notice by statements which I am inclined to think he has collected from persons such as I have described, from those whose accounts of the condition of the navy naturally receive a colouring from their own situation. Thus the hon. gentleman would persuade us to found our verdict on an occasion so important as that now before us, upon evidence drawn from such sources, upon second-hand assertions, in a word, upon mere hearsay. The hon. gentleman is no doubt a conscientious man, he certainly so considers and describes himself, and we cannot give him any credit at all if we do not believe him to be so ; and would appeal to his conscientiousness whether he does think that any court of justice—and this house is now called upon to act in that capacity—would pronounce sentence in any case upon evidence of the nature of that upon which he seems to rely ? I say that there is no court that would attend to, much less believe, such assertions. If the hon. gentleman has any charge to urge against the noble lord, against whom the motion before the house appears to be pointed, I say, let the evidence be brought forward ; but do not let accusations be insinuated abroad, unsupported by any witnesses whatever, unjustified by any fact, and excused only by a loose statement that such and such officers, whom no one ventures to name, are much in the habit of speaking ill of the conduct of the admiralty and of the character of its principal director. The hon. gentleman, however, has told us, that he entertains a very

sincere respect for this noble lord, and really here I must remark, that I never heard of any public character for whom men are more forward to profess respect, nor one that is so much respected, and yet so much aspersed. The grounds of the respect are, however, notorious, while those of the aspersion are not even pretended to rest upon anything more than hearsay evidence, which is surely not sufficient to induce this house to acquiesce in a motion that has no other object in view, than to convey an imputation upon one of the most gallant and meritorious characters this country has ever produced. For such a purpose I will never give my vote. I will not, therefore, consent to the grant of a single slip of paper, however plausible the pretence for demanding it, that may lead to an inquiry for which there is not the shadow of excuse, and import an accusation for which there is not the slightest ground. I would ask the right hon. gentleman who moved this proposition, what are the reasons—for he certainly has not stated any—which have provoked him to alter his sentiments with respect to the noble lord who was the subject of such warm panegyric, upon the first accession of the present ministers to office? and who, I would be curious to know, does the right hon. gentleman think more adequate to the high station he fills? whom would he recommend to succeed him? If the right hon. gentleman did pronounce the splendid panegyric to which I have alluded upon this noble lord, upon slight grounds, he was certainly very censurable; for he was, as it were, giving a false character, and that to a great public servant; but it was well known that those grounds were not light—they rested upon the highest public services, and were supported by the warm and unanimous applauses of the country. Why then have the right hon. gentleman, and the hon. gentleman who spoke last, changed their opinions? Why have they altered their sentiments of the noble lord? Has anything occurred since to induce or justify the change? I challenge them to take the most minute retrospect of the conduct of that noble lord since his appointment to the presidency of the admiralty; I call upon them to retrace all his steps, and to point out one reason why he has forfeited their confidence; I mean such a reason as this house would recognise as sufficient to justify the proposed inquiry. What facts have they in their power to produce? I am satisfied they have none, and therefore I will resist the proposition; and this is the first

instance in which it has happened that I have felt it my duty to oppose a motion for inquiry. Indeed, on every such motion heretofore that I recollect, particularly during the administration of the right hon. gentleman by whom the present motion was submitted to the house, ample grounds were laid to demand inquiry; but in this instance I am of opinion that the demand is unsupported, not merely by common sense, but common decency. I do not intend to attribute improper motives to the right hon. mover; but I beg to ask him, what good can he accomplish by the production of papers respecting the state of our navy in a former war? What are his views? Does he mean to institute a comparison between Lord St. Vincent and Lord Spencer; to ascertain which of the two is better qualified to manage our naval concerns? I cannot see the purpose of such a contrast. It cannot tend to any good object. Indeed I am confident, that if a stranger were to observe the whole of this proceeding, he would not hesitate to pronounce that it could be only actuated by factious and party motives. This I am the more strongly inclined to believe from the statements of the gallant officer (Sir Edward Pellew), which were quite a satisfactory reply to all the arguments that have been advanced this evening, and a full refutation of the calumnies that have been for some time back propagated relative to the condition of our navy. In that speech, which applied as forcibly to the heart as the understanding, the hon. baronet manifested not only that sincerity and frankness which is the general characteristic of the profession of which he forms so bright an ornament, and which never fails to interest any man capable of feeling, but also a considerable share of acuteness and judgment: he made some pertinent remarks upon the nature of those gun-boats which seem to be such favourites of the right hon. gentleman who brought forward this motion, but of which the hon. baronet does not appear at all to approve; and, from my own observation, I certainly am disposed to agree with the hon. baronet, who is much more competent to judge upon the subject than the right hon. gentleman or any other statesman. I am not surprised that these gun-boats should be treated with so much contempt by naval men. I have happened to see something of them myself, by accident, in the course of the last war, on the south coast, and they really appeared to me to be quite unfit to render any material service

in the way of attack or defence ; indeed, some of them were incapable of firing a shot. It is known that out of the 120 gun-boats which the right hon. gentleman had in commission at the close of the last war, there were scarcely any retained as at all useful, and that sixty-two of them, which were purchased from contractors, were much the worst. Enough has been said by the hon. baronet of the kind of vessels which contractors generally built : and without referring to the ships of the line of which the right hon. baronet has taken notice, in proof of the badness of their materials, and the inferiority of their workmanship, I shall only remark on these gun-boats. I do not, indeed, like to dwell on the misconduct of inferior officers in any department. I do not wish to hear of such persons in this house ; we should always look to the heads of those departments as the persons answerable to us. The navy board may be suspected of having played into the hands of the contractors during the last war ; and perhaps, to that was owing the great inferiority of the right hon. gentleman's gun-boats—an inferiority which was certainly very glaring, for, out of the 120, 87 were sold, after advertisement, for almost nothing ; some which could not be disposed of were retained, and six were sent to Jersey, which were found so utterly useless, that Captain D'Auvergne knew not what to do with them. He, however, sent five of them home some time after, and was obliged to send some of his best cruizers to tow them safely. Yet this is the kind of force which the right hon. gentleman would recommend in preference to any other to defend our coast. It reminds me of an anecdote of the right hon. gentleman's administration, when three men of war were sent to this country from Portugal, which was our ally ; those ships were found to be incapable of giving us any assistance ; but on the contrary, were so little sea-worthy, that it was determined to send them home, and it became absolutely necessary to dispatch one of our frigates with them as a convoy. Such shipping would of course be rather an incumbrance to us ; and the gun-boats, to which the right hon. gentleman is so partial, would, from all that I have heard abroad, which is corroborated by the hon. baronet this night, be rather injurious on the score of expense, and the number of men they would necessarily require, than likely to be serviceable. An hon. admiral on the lower bench (Admiral Berkeley), has, in the course of a very extraordinary

speech, stated that he had delivered in a plan to the admiralty, which, if acted upon, must effectually secure our own coast, and completely destroy the flotilla of the enemy. The gallant admiral has detailed to the house some parts of this plan ; but he has not told us whether it was the production of his own brain or that of some other person, and doubtless it would be, from the specimen he has given us, a strong proof of his own gallantry to own it—(a laugh). Without pretending to much nautical knowledge, one might, I think, question the correctness of the hon. admiral's ideas upon this project, for the practicability of making use of gun-boats to annoy the flotillas on the French coast is denied by every intelligent naval officer ; but whatever may be their use in the shoals along that coast, they surely are incapable of any utility, comparable to that which may be derived from large shipping upon our own coast. Wherever the latter can be employed, the former must be comparatively useless. It is notorious that all along from Pevensey to Dungeness, a man of war can anchor close in shore, such is the depth of water. This, therefore, is the description of force upon which I would place my confidence either for attack or defence. As to the former, who can entertain a doubt that, if the French gun-boats should venture out, and the slightest breeze should arise, that Captain Markham, whom I mention, not as a member of parliament, for that I know would be irregular, but as a naval officer, that Sir Edward Pellew, Sir Thomas Trowbridge, or, in fact, any officer known in our naval records, would, with a single seventy-four, shoot through, and sink a crowd of that contemptible craft ? With respect to the number of seamen and marines now employed, it has been stated by the right hon. gentleman on the treasury bench, that there are only 98,000, which is only 200 short of the whole amount voted. But the hon. gentleman who spoke last is still dissatisfied. He says that there ought to be more men. He does not seem to recollect, that the vote of the house limited the admiralty ; and that it was at the time that vote was made, the hon. gentleman's objections would have been most timely and proper. That was the period to consider the amount of the force necessary to maintain the war. The admiralty had thought 100,000 men sufficient, and it appeared that they were right, notwithstanding the hon. gentleman's disapprobation. They had, and it was not the least of their merit, col-

lected this vast force in the space of twelve months, notwithstanding the number of our other descriptions of force, and without interrupting the active employment of our population in the various avocations of commerce, manufactures, and agriculture. To the observations of the right hon. gentleman, on the propriety of building ships in the merchants' yards, I trust enough has been said by the hon. baronet (Sir Edward Pellew), at whose presence this night the house has reason to rejoice, to convince the right hon. gentleman of his error, and also to show him that his partiality to gun-boats is not quite so judicious as he imagined. After what the hon. baronet has urged on this point, I should hope the right hon. gentleman will no longer attempt to maintain his argument, unless he be influenced by such magnanimity, that he would not wish to oppose the French gun-boats by any but their own matches—(a laugh). I have heard a right hon. gentleman on the lower bench (Mr. Wyndham) often deplore that “the days of chivalry were gone;” but surely that complaint can no longer be repeated, if the right hon. mover of the proposition before the house shall continue to manifest a wish rather to oppose gun-boats to those of the French, than to see a crowd of them run down by an English seventy-four. This would be something like the feeling which I am sure would influence the right hon. gentleman on the lower bench, if, in passing through the street, he should happen to see two men engaged of unequal size and strength. The right hon. gentleman would immediately interest himself for the weaker party, and call into action that science for which he is so distinguished, to release, and perhaps to avenge him—(a laugh). To be serious: it is absurd to say that we should at once give up that formidable description of naval force, in which we have always found our strength and our glory, and take up another which is condemned, not merely by the experience to which I have already referred, but by the judgment of the most respectable naval officers. That this change too, should be chosen, as the right hon. gentleman recommended, merely in order to reduce us to a level with the French boats, for no other argument to support the choice has been advanced, really surprises me. It is something like this, that if we had a stone wall to defend us against the shot of an enemy, it should be recommended to us to throw down the wall, and fling stones at our assailants. An anecdote has been very

generally mentioned with respect to the right hon. gentleman who commenced this debate; it is said that he proposed this sentiment—"The volunteers, and a speedy meeting with the enemy on our own shores." This toast, I understand, was proposed among a number of volunteer officers above six months ago, at a time when the volunteers, upon whom we are so much to rely for our security, could not be much acquainted with discipline, if, according to the right hon. gentleman's assertion, they are even now very defective in that respect. I am as ready as any man to pay a just compliment to the right hon. gentleman's active endeavours to promote the improvement of the volunteers. I acknowledge that his solicitude for their advancement and glory is considerable, and probably he wishes to remove any impediment in their way. His desire is, perhaps, that they should have a full opportunity of distinguishing themselves pursuant to the toast I have quoted. If such be his view, he certainly could not accomplish it by better means than by contriving to have the defence of our country committed to his favourite gun-boats, instead of men-of-war. Independently of the other objections I have offered to those gun-boats, there is one which occurs to me of too much strength to be omitted. If they were of the same kind as those of last war, any description of men would be good enough, or too good, for them; and if good men were required for them, they could not be had without deducting from the number necessary for our important shipping. Why then join with the corrupt band of detected speculators in censuring the admiralty for not paying all the attention which the right hon. gentleman desired to these gun-boats? A little consideration ought to be sufficient to prevent any man from complaining of that respectable board;—that board which is respectable in the estimation of all men but mistaken partisans, or fraudulent contractors;—that board, which has had such numerous difficulties to encounter, all incurred by a solicitude to expose and punish fraud—to recover and to spare the public money. Has the right hon. gentleman read the five reports from the commissioners appointed to inquire into the abuses committed in the several branches of the naval department? If so, has he not there seen the foul corruption, the abominable artifice, with which the admiralty has had to struggle? Has the right hon. gentleman observed the frauds exposed in the second

report—the block and coopers' contracts, where £2,000 have been paid for work proved not to be worth £200. Has he read the description of the plunder practised on seamen by prize agents? and if so, can he—can any man who loves the friends of his country and virtue—refuse his gratitude and admiration to the first lord of the admiralty, who originated this inquiry—an inquiry which has irritated against him a host of enemies? they are enemies, however, which the noble lord must despise. It was but the prejudice of defeated vice against triumphant virtue. It could not disturb the noble lord's mind. While he was only assailed by those worms who had fed and fattened upon the corruption of the navy—while he had only to reckon as his foes those who had proved themselves hostile to honour and justice, who had enriched themselves on the spoils of their country—while such only were his enemies, the noble lord would proceed in his course of glory as he did in the victory on the memorable 14th of February, 1797, disdaining and declining to retaliate their attack; but when the right hon. author of the motion before the house becomes his assailant, the noble lord must feel surprised. Even that right hon. gentleman, however, cannot injure him. His fame stands too high—his character is too firmly established to be hurt by the assertions of any member; and I have no doubt that the noble lord will be ever found entitled to the applause and protection of his country. With regard to the right hon. gentleman's recommendation, that shipping should be built in the merchants' dock-yards, I shall only refer him to the ships mentioned by the hon. baronet, and also to the cases described in the reports of the commissioners of naval inquiry, particularly to the cases where it appeared that the persons who received payment for the ships built in merchants' yards, were clerks in the king's dock-yards. It is possible to suppose, that collusions did not exist in such cases as these? The right hon. gentleman has said, that "it is impossible during war to build any number of ships in the king's dock-yards, and that therefore a necessity arises of resorting to the merchants' yards." What a melancholy expression, that in those yards, where there were 3,200 men employed, nothing more than the repair of ships could be done! If so, then our surprise must be diminished, that a French fleet should have been permitted, in the course of the last war, to find its way to Ireland, where nothing but the

elements offered to prevent a formidable French army from landing. If, however, the king's dock-yards are really so little useful, or rather so useless, they ought to be abolished altogether. A new system ought to be adopted. If they could only finish in these yards twenty-four sail of the line, fifteen frigates, and some few sloops, in the course of twenty years, although it is known that forty-five shipwrights can build a seventy-four in one year—as there are 3,200 shipwrights in those yards, and the expense, &c. could not be less in twenty years than £4,100,000 a sum equal to the building of the whole navy of England, it follows, of course, that it is bad policy to continue the maintenance of these dockyards. It is, besides, well known that the internal system of these yards is bad. There is no difference in the wages allowed to the workmen; the unskilful can earn as much as those of a different description. Thus emulation is prevented, and many advantages, of course, lost to the employers. The right hon. gentleman may answer this, and say, that although so many abuses have been detected by the commissioners of naval inquiry, still the system of the dock-yards is good: but I assert, and am prepared to maintain the assertion, that abuse pervades in every department of the system. Does the right hon. gentleman know of the frauds which the commissioners have found to have been committed in every article with which these yards are furnished, particularly blocks? From these abuses arise the necessity of advertising for contractors to build shipping; and as to correct them, to produce integrity and arrangement in all the departments of the navy, is, and has been, the great endeavour of the high character upon whom it appears to be the object of the motion before the house to fix an imputation, I shall vote against it with as much satisfaction as ever I gave a vote since I had the honour of a seat in this house; fully convinced that such a motion is only calculated to gratify the corrupt, to frown upon reform, and to assail the reputation of a gallant officer, whose claims to the gratitude of the country can only be equalled by the esteem and attachment he enjoys among all that are great and good.

JUNE 18.

ADDITIONAL FORCE BILL.

The chancellor of the exchequer moved that the bill be engrossed.

MR. SHERIDAN said, to the arguments, sir, which have been urged in support of the measure before the house, the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Addington) who has just sat down has given such a full and fair reply, that I do not think it necessary to enter into the subject as I had otherwise intended. The objections to this bill have been so forcibly maintained by that right hon. gentleman, and he has put the subject upon such fair and constitutional grounds, that I should decline to trouble the house upon this occasion, if it were not for the observations of my right hon. friend (Mr. Canning), who has not confined himself to the bill under consideration, but has thought proper to introduce matter not strictly relevant, but yet of infinitely more importance than the bill itself—I mean my right hon. friend's allusion to the degree of confidence to which the present administration is entitled. My right hon. friend stated, that he was not disposed to adulation towards his right hon. friend who sits near him (Mr. Pitt), and for whom, no doubt, he entertains the most sincere respect and regard. I hope he will do me the justice to think, that I am equally incapable of adulation towards my right hon. friend on the same bench with me (Mr. Fox). I certainly am no flatterer, although in point of attachment to my right hon. friend, I will not yield to that which my right hon. friend on the opposite side can or does profess to feel for his right hon. friend beside him; with this difference, however, on my part, that my attachment to my right hon. friend on this side of the house is of a much longer standing—that it is the first, the strongest, and the only political attachment of my life. But my right hon. friend disclaims adulation towards his friend, and, indeed, he seems to me to have had no occasion to do so, for he certainly did not deal in it; on the contrary, he has taken occasion to pronounce upon the conduct of his right hon. friend one of the bitterest satires that could be well imagined. My right hon. friend expresses his surprise, that we who oppose this bill can contrive to co-operate, and that we can avoid quarrelling when we get into the lobby; but is it not equally, if not more

a matter of surprise, that he can avoid quarrelling with some of his friends near him, to whom he has been so very lately in decided opposition, and particularly with the noble lord (Castlereagh) who appears now to have determined which of the "two strings" he should put to his bow? (A laugh.) If my right hon. friend will look at those about him, he will find that the compliments and censures which he meant for the right hon. gentleman on the lower bench (Mr. Addington), were applicable also to some of his present connections. Whatever praise or condemnation applies to the one, applies equally to the other, with this difference, that the compliment called forth by the retirement of the one from office, when the voice of parliament and the country called for it, is not deserved by the other, who still remains in power. Some part of the administration of the right hon. gentleman on the lower bench I most cordially approved, and his intentions in every instance I respected, because I firmly believed them to be pure and honourable. I esteemed the motives which actuated his public conduct, because I was certain of his disposition, whatever might be the sentiments of some of his colleagues, to govern the country upon the principles of the constitution. I know that his acceptance of office was a sacrifice, and I feel that his retirement from it was a triumph. But did my right hon. friend, I would ask him, mean it as a compliment to the right hon. gentleman, that immediately upon his retirement from office, he started into an open, manly, and systematic opposition; or did he mean it as an indirect sarcasm upon the conduct of his right hon. friend? Did my right hon. friend mean to say, that when the right hon. gentleman resigned his situation, he did not offer an insidious support to his successor; that he did not seat himself behind him for the purpose of availing himself of the first opportunity to push him out; that when a motion of impeachment was made against his successor, he did not attempt to suspend the judgment of the question, by the shabby, shallow pretext of moving the previous question? No! such has not been the conduct of the right hon. gentleman, and the line he has pursued will be entitled to commendation. What are we to think, what can my right hon. friend say of that course of proceeding which I have described? a course which had nothing manly, consistent, or direct about it. In this conduct, however, my right hon. friend did not participate, and

of course merits no part of the censure attached to it by every generous and liberal-minded man. My right hon. friend has given credit to the right hon. gentleman for retiring from office before he was forced out by actual opposition—for taking the hint from parliament. If he be serious in pronouncing this laudable, what can he think of the six members of the late cabinet who still continue in office, who consent to act with, and even subordinate to, the very right hon. gentleman who so lately treated them with contumely and contempt? If the behaviour of the one be manly, how are we to estimate the other? how are we to judge of the situation of that noble lord (Hawkesbury) whose conduct in office appears to have given such particular offence to my right hon. friend? But I derive some consolation from the language of my right hon. friend, for as he applauds so much the act of the right hon. gentleman, in having resigned his office when parliament and the country seemed to wish it, when he had in this house but a majority of 37, I have reason to hope, that as his right hon. friend had only a majority of 28 on a former evening, which majority will, I think, be reduced this night, my right hon. friend will recommend to him an imitation of the gallant and dignified conduct of the right hon. gentleman on the lower bench—that he will advise him not to persevere any farther with such a mean, decreasing majority, after having lost the confidence of all the independent part of parliament and the country. My right hon. friend, indeed, states that he would wish to see an administration formed upon a broader scale, and in this declaration I really believe him sincere. If he considers what his right hon. friend now is, and what he might have been, I am pretty sure that such must be his wish. I am also sure that my right hon. friend delivers his real sentiment when he states that he feels himself in a post of danger. I believe that he considers the administration to which he belongs as not at all likely to last; and I will go a step farther, I believe that neither himself nor his right hon. friend really think that it ought to last; for they must be aware that it is an arrangement which has excited discontent and complaint through every part of the country. It is an arrangement of such a nature that my right hon. friend thinks it necessary to offer something in the shape of an apology for the part he has taken in it. My right hon. friend has taken occasion, in some degree, to contrast his attachment to his

right hon. friend at the head of administration, with my attachment to my right hon. friend beside me ; but there is this difference between us, that I can never follow the same line as that which my right hon. friend has done this night, to excuse his acceptance of a high office under the administration of his right hon. friend. I do not feel it necessary to enter into any justification of my attachment to my right hon. friend ; for, although I do not find him holding one of the first offices in the government, I find him surrounded with honour ; although I do not find him leading a cabinet, I see him followed by all that is independent in the rank, character, consequence, and population of the country. I see him restored to the friendship of all those good and great men from whom he has, though he never ought to have been separated, or rather I see those personages restored to him. In a word, I have the happiness to observe the public character of my right hon. friend placed on a more exalted eminence than it ever before stood on. An attachment to him, therefore, it cannot be any other than a source of the most gratifying pride to reflect upon. My right hon. friend, in the course of the justification which he has attempted for his conduct in co-operating with his right hon. friend, has dwelt a good deal upon the happy event of the removal of what he termed the late ministers ; but my right hon. friend seemed to forget that that removal was far from being complete. To be sure, some of those with whom my right hon. friend professed to have been dissatisfied, were removed. He was dissatisfied with the conduct of the department for foreign affairs, and therefore out goes Lord Hawkesbury ; and sorry I am to perceive that that noble lord has put the seal to his own condemnation ; being charged with mismanagement and incapacity, he consents to be degraded in order to make room for another noble lord, who certainly has yet to prove his ability, who has at least no experience to recommend him. This removal must no doubt be a source of much mortification to those who may be intimately connected with the noble lord : but this alone was not enough to satisfy my right hon. friend and to reconcile him to the administration. He disliked the admiralty, and therefore that silly, incapable person, Earl St. Vincent, is removed ; and his place is filled by that tried, experienced seaman, Lord Melville—(a laugh). In the office of the war minister also, my right hon. friend saw good ground for complaint, and therefore

the noble lord (Hobart) who held that situation, is superseded by a noble lord who gallantly resigned the government of Ireland, because it was a time of war and trouble, and much disturbance was apprehended in that country. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that my right hon. friend should express his regret that his right hon. friend has not better support ; for all those being dismissed for detected, acknowledged incapacity, according to the language of my right hon. friend, of whom his right hon. friend spoke in such lofty terms of praise, none remain in office, but those six of whom his right hon. friend did not think worth while to utter one word in the way of commendation. But of the right hon. gentleman's praise much does not seem to be thought, and therefore it is, perhaps, that we have had no panegyric pronounced upon the qualifications of the persons just introduced into his cabinet. After the perfect knowledge of human nature which the right hon. gentleman has manifested, particularly in the expedition to Holland, and the representation with respect to some of the late ministers, his opinions of mankind do not appear to be held in any estimation, and therefore, no doubt, it is that the house has not heard one word from the right hon. gentleman as to the merits of his new colleagues. I dare say that this silence was in consequence of a previous stipulation. They most probably said to the right hon. gentleman, " You may give us ribands, titles, pensions, places, or anything you like, but a character : do, for God's sake, save our names from the peril of your praise—for, if you praise us, both you and we shall be laughed at." My right hon. friend has frequently said, " Away with the cant of ' not men but measures,' for it is a frivolous notion, as it is not the harness, but the horses which draw the carriage;" but I would ask my right hon. friend, what is to become of the harness and carriage with such horses as his right hon. friend has now engaged ? There are six of them that are old, and six new—a double set to be sure. The former are part of that " slow-paced, lumpish, awkward collection," upon which my right hon. friend so severely commented in the discussion of Colonel Patten's motion. They of course can be of no use, and so the six new nags will have to draw not only the carriage, but those six heavy cast-off blacks along with it. (A laugh.) Now, if in such a situation my right hon. friend does not feel himself embarrassed, and anxious for the release of his

right hon. friend and himself, he cannot have that feeling of dignity and solicitude for honourable reputation which I am willing to ascribe to him. Among the arguments advanced by my right hon. friend in favour of the bill before the house, there were some that struck me to be very extraordinary indeed. (Here Mr. Sheridan, searching for his notes, found they were lost, which produced a laugh, and the hon. member observed, that his right hon. friend, he dared say, was not sorry that he had lost them.) My right hon. friend, observed the hon. member, complains that we should express our disappointment that the measure before the house is not equal to the expectation we entertained, and states that from the number of troops already existing, it was impossible to draw more from the martial resources of the country than this bill proposes to obtain; but my right hon. friend should recollect that the fault lies with those by whom our imaginations were raised so high. If we complain of disappointment, who raised our expectations? The right hon. gentleman, in the course of his opposition to the late minister, held forth such high promises—talked of what he would do if in office, that he would submit a measure of vast importance, &c.—that it was impossible not to have our curiosity and expectations strongly excited; but after all this prodigious parade of means in contemplation for the increase of our public force, what do we see? Instead of plans at all promising efficiency, instead of looking for an armed Minerva from the brain of this Jupiter, we see a puny, rickety bantling, which, after being sent to the parish nurse, does not appear to have gristle or bone ever to attain the age of manhood. In truth, I cannot suppose that the right hon. gentleman himself thinks that this bill will procure men. The only object seems to be to raise a tax upon the landed interest, to inflict penalties and enact forfeitures. The right hon. gentleman only proposes to levy a tax in a novel way. If, by such a system, men should really be had, I am persuaded that the right hon. gentleman would be more surprised than any other man in the country; that he would feel as much astonished as he lately was at the wonderful discovery, that but few ballotted men gave personal service. Even supposing that the proposed number of men could be recruited, where, I would ask, are six or seven thousand persons to be found qualified to officer them? The right hon. gentleman must know that the thing is impossible. But the mode

suggested to discipline those corps is really ludicrous. The idea of attaching one battalion to another is not unlike that of throwing a young woman in the way of an old man for the purpose of courtship, in the hope that, after the opportunity of what is commonly termed "keeping company," they will "come together," matrimony must be the consequence. Absurd as this may seem, it is not more so than that such a connection as that proposed in this bill, between a battalion of regulars and one of the new levies, can tend to promote or preserve discipline. It is ridiculous to talk of discipline in a corps where, as in the new levies, the officers will be urged to ask favours of their men. If a man belonging to the regulars shall be found tippling with any of the new levies, he can plead that he was endeavouring to prevail on the other to enlist for general service—that he was only employed in endeavouring to forward the views of government. At such irregularities as these officers must connive, or the enlistment from among those new levies will not be productive. From an army thus constituted and so employed, what evils are not to be apprehended ! So fully convinced am I of the mischief that must result from it as to think that, if the bill should be adopted, the most appropriate title for it would be "a bill for the destruction of military discipline." In considering the means of providing for the defence of the country, I am sorry to perceive that gentlemen, whose opinions upon other occasions I most sincerely respect, should look so much, or rather entirely, to the extension of our regular army. With respect to the army, however, I wish to observe, that in my opinion men should be enlisted for that service not only on terms limited as to time, but as to place. The latter regulation would tend to save the lives of many soldiers, while the policy of the former is so generally acknowledged, and has been so often discussed, that the surprise is, that ministers hesitate to act upon it. Upon this question, as to the augmentation of our regular army, I cannot forbear to say, that I always look upon such augmentation with jealousy ; I would not risk the liberties of the country, by the enlargement of our standing army. If I were asked whether I would not rather trust our defence in the field against the attack of a foreign foe to regular troops, I would immediately answer in the affirmative ; still, however, keeping in view the compromise between difficulties, the necessity of

securing our freedom against the influence and power of a large standing army, I would have our volunteers and militia aided by a due proportion of the regular army. The people of this country are competent to their own defence, and are ready to take the tone from those above them. They have regard for the high station which freemen may be supposed to feel; they have none of the slavish attachment to clans, but they look up to their superiors—and I use this word in its liberal sense—they look up to you, their superiors, with confidence, because you do not look down on them with insult. Give, then, to such a people proper example and encouragement, and you will not have any occasion to look for a large standing army to defend your country. The people of England know the value of the objects for which they have to contend. They feel that, from the constitution of the society in which they live, there is nothing of honour, emolument, or wealth, which is not within the reach of a man of merit. The landlord, the shopkeeper, or mechanic, must be sensible that he is contending not merely for what he possesses, but for everything of importance which the country contains; and I would call on the humblest peasant to put forth his endeavours in the national struggle to defend his son's title to the great seal of England. Acting upon this plan, employing proper means to animate the country, would render it unnecessary to hire an army to defend us or to resist any enemy. It is because I am satisfied of this fact—because I know that in this important conjuncture, which so strongly demands the valour of the brave, the vigour of the strong, the means of the wealthy, and the councils of the wise, we could obtain all that is requisite by operating judiciously upon the character of the people, that I object to the frequent call for an increase of our regular army, as I know that such increase must invest the executive government with a power dangerous to the existence of liberty. I like an army of the people, because no people were ever found to commit a *felo de se* upon their own liberty; but I dislike a large standing army, because I never knew popular liberty in any state long to survive such an establishment. It is upon these grounds that I disapprove of the sentiments so often urged as to the augmentation of the regular army, and particularly by an officer whose information upon military subjects is, no doubt, entitled to the utmost respect; but, whatever may be his in-

formation and experience upon military topics, if he had the ability of the Archduke Charles, until he shall look at the whole of the subject, until he shall examine it as a statesman, with a mixed attention to the rights of the people and the military defence of the country, I cannot defer to his opinions. With regard to the principles upon which the present administration is formed, I shall conclude with a few observations. The cause of the exclusion, which is so much and so justly complained of, we are all tolerably well able to conjecture; but it would be, I am aware, indecorous to describe it in this house. I know it would be unparliamentary to introduce into debate any particular allusion to this circumstance. Of the personage, however, to whom it refers, I cannot speak from any particular knowledge; but of him who is next in rank and consequence, I can say, that that illustrious personage whose name I know my duty too well to mention, who stood forward at the commencement of the war, displaying a noble example of his wish to promote unanimity, to rally all parties round the standard of the country, entertains no political prejudice against any public man—though, God knows, he has had much to forgive. Far, however, from indulging resentment, I am sure that he would be forward to accept, to call for the services of any political character who could contribute in this great crisis to the safety of the empire.

For the motion 265; against it 223.

MARCH 6, 1805.

ADDITIONAL FORCE BILL.

MR. SHERIDAN said, I rise sir, in pursuance of the notice I took the liberty of giving on a former day, to move for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the act of last session, intituled, “An act to provide for the better defence of the country, and for the gradual increase of our disposable force.” I choose to read the whole title of this act, rather in compliment to the feelings of the right hon. gentleman, than to call it by its general denomination, “Mr. Pitt’s parish bill.” It is impossible for me, before I proceed further not to observe shortly on the impression which seemed to have been produced upon the gentlemen on the other side, when I thought it my duty to give notice of this motion. Those gentlemen appeared to express surprise, not unaccom-

panied by some disapprobation, that I should attempt to propose bringing forward such a motion. What excited that surprise I am rather at a loss to conjecture. Perhaps the right hon. gentleman over against me thought that the debate on this subject need not go on any further, conscious, no doubt, that the case stated by my right hon. friend on a former evening was but weakly supported; and that the answer of my right hon. friend who sits near him was quite sufficient, or rather that that answer contained matter so forcible and conclusive, argument and eloquence that overwhelmed us on this side of the house—that gave us such a shock that some time was necessary to enable us to meet it with any effect, to come fresh to the contest. Perhaps too, the disapprobation which was manifested proceeded from this, that it was deemed disrespectful to the right hon. gentleman to press upon him any further discussion of a subject, to the consideration of which he seemed so peculiarly unwilling to proceed. In truth, the right hon. gentleman did appear to be very bashful of this topic, and I am quite sure that he very reluctantly touches upon it at all. Another cause of the disapprobation I allude to, may be attributed to this, that my notice implied a doubt of the force of that reply which the friends of my right hon. friend have been so anxious to extol. It was evidently the supposition of the gentlemen on the other side that the hint should be taken from the disinclination shown by the right hon. gentleman to enter into this question, and that we should abstain from the performance of our duty. But regardless alike of the feelings of the right hon. gentleman himself upon this subject, as of the surprise or disapprobation of his advocates, I rise to bring forward this motion. It may be said, that any inquiry of mine into the military state of the country cannot be necessary, after the very able and comprehensive dissertation we have so recently heard from my right hon. friend on the lower bench on that subject. With those who argue so I should most cordially agree; but it will be recollected, that in the course of that masterly review of my right hon. friend, he but incidentally noticed this act, which I conceive to be a disgrace to our statute book. It is natural that the gentlemen on the other side feeling this, aware that the act has utterly failed of its object, should disapprove of any attempt to ridicule its imbecility, or put a period to its existence. In endeavouring to accomplish this, some of those

common-place censures which are thrown out against men who attempt to oppose any measure for the defence of the country, may be applied to me ; but I feel that they are entirely inapplicable, for I contend that the act, which it is my object to repeal, is not a measure for the defence of the country ; the bill has no such character or tendency. To oppose its continuance, therefore, cannot subject any man to that outcry which it is the fashion to raise against the opponents of measures of a different description. If the proposition I mean to submit to the house had the remotest tendency to injure the spirit, to depress the heart and feelings of the country, in the present emergency, I trust I should be the last man to bring it forward. But satisfied that it is calculated to produce quite a contrary effect, I cannot be dissuaded from pursuing it. Again, I repeat, that I cannot conceive the reason why my notice was treated as I have described on a former evening, nor can I anticipate how my motion may be treated this night. To the speech of my right hon. friend on the lower bench, I remember that the right hon. gentleman on the opposite side thought proper to preserve a most resolute and dignified silence. He did not seem to think that it was such as to call for the reply of a minister, and that the answer which it received from my hon. friend was sufficient to content him. I have often heard that the right hon. gentleman was rather an unreasonable, discontented, expecting kind of man ; but if he really was contented with the reply of my right hon. friend near him to the speech of my right hon. friend on the lower bench, I must say that he is the most easily contented man I ever heard of. I know that it has been asserted by the advocates of the right hon. gentleman, out of doors, that that reply was complete ; but sure I am that no man in this house who heard it ever thought it so, and least of all was it so thought by my right hon. friend himself, who delivered it. I admire the talents of my right hon. friend as much as any man, yet, upon the occasion alluded to, I could not help observing the difficulty he had to struggle with ; the embarrassed and staggering course he made ; I was conscious that my right hon. friend felt that he had very little to say to the purpose ; that he was sailing against wind and tide ; that although the puff of a cheer from his friends sometimes produced a slight swell in his sails, he could make but little progress ; that he raised his voice aloud, but produced

no impression ; that he dropped argument and produced a noise ; that, in fact, he made a fine catamaran speech (a laugh), plenty of noise, but little mischief to his adversary at least. What mischief he may have done to the system he would support I cannot pretend to say. Having said so much as to the conduct of the gentlemen on the other side on a former evening, I shall now take notice of some of the propositions of my right hon. friend. I shall confine myself entirely to the military argument. There were some points in the speech of my right hon. friend which I am now unwilling to take up. If I were to dwell upon them, I should have no doubt of being cheered by the right hon. gentleman on the other side. In the wide scope of my right hon. friend's general view, he advanced some opinions from which I differ. In his view of some points in our military defence, I certainly cannot agree with him ; but the hon. gentlemen on the other side are much mistaken if they look for anything from that difference which can afford them any amusement.—Whatever occasional warmth I may have shown in animadverting on the opinions of my right hon. friend, I have always felt and acknowledged the grounds of his opinions to be substantially good, and ever disposed to treat them with due deference. Yet I never could bring myself, in some important questions, entirely to concur with him. The volunteer system, for instance, I have ever thought, and do still think, entitled to the highest admiration, and to the particular gratitude of the country. I really do believe that the existence, the number, and the spirit of the volunteers, had more power on the mind of the enemy, had more effect in making him shrink from attempting the execution of his menaced attack, than all our other force. I will not take upon myself to say that I have received any certain knowledge upon the subject, but I have enough to justify me in asserting, that the volunteers produced a most important effect on the resolutions of the French government, and particularly on the mind of Talleyrand ; and this was naturally to be expected, for that gallant body served to dislodge the opinion which generally existed in France with respect to this nation. The volunteers showed most satisfactorily that the “shop-keeping, indolent, luxurious” people of this country were not disposed to loll on their couches in a time of public danger, and trust wholly to an hired army for their defence. Whether the

volunteer system was or was not exceptionable in the first construction of it, it must be matter of satisfaction to all men to know this important fact ; and it must furnish a ground for peculiar congratulation to the volunteers themselves, to find that they had so materially contributed to the safety of the state, and to the character of the country also. For they had convinced the enemy that all his calculations respecting us were unfounded. The volunteers have convinced him of the resolute spirit and unconquerable mind of the nation. I, therefore, cannot but be proud of the support I have uniformly given to the volunteer system, however much I may regret my difference of opinion with my right hon. friend, with whom I cannot help repeating that I also differ upon another important point ; I still retain the opinion that I so often before stated, that the military force of this country ought to be varied, and that great advantages arise from our various descriptions of force. For whatever may be my confidence in the character and disposition of the regular army, I must say, that my opinion has undergone no change ; that the people of any country cannot long retain their liberty who trust altogether to an hired army. Some gentlemen, I understand, have said, that it would be imprudent to adopt this motion, that the repeal at present of the act to which it refers would damp the spirit of the country. But I would seriously put it to the candour of those gentlemen, whether it is rational to apprehend that the repeal of an act which, according to the knowledge and confession of everybody, has totally failed, could create any dismay ? I think the contrary is the rational calculations. But what will be said of the bill when the time and manner in which it was introduced is called to the recollection of the house ? When the right hon. author of this bill was out of office, he exclaimed loudly against the imbecility and inactivity of his predecessor ; he stated what a force he should produce if his plans were adopted. He complained of the limited amount of the force which his predecessor was able to raise. Yet, after all the pompous vaunting pledges of the right hon. gentleman ; after all his promises of activity and vigour, when “ I ” comes in, what does “ I ” do ? Can any man say that he has not completely broken his promises to this house and the country ? After then the notoriety of such failure, and particularly with respect to this bill, is it not idle and absurd to tell the house that it would be

indiscreet, that it would be shocking, to mention a word about the failure to the country ; that we should keep the thing snug to ourselves ? Such a mockery is not to be endured. What, after the only measure which the right hon. gentleman has introduced since he dispossessed his predecessor, has proved inefficient as to the raising of men, which was its professed object, to be told that this measure shall still be allowed to go on now that it is entirely become a tax bill ! The demand implies extraordinary confidence. Before the right hon. gentleman returned to power, before he had succeeded in removing what he and his friends so often termed the rubbish that stood in his way, we were told much of the extraordinary things that he had in contemplation for the defence of the country. We were told, indeed, that our salvation could only be effected by this great Cæsar ; and yet what has he done to justify those assertions ? — literally nothing. He may show a regular army on paper, but whatever really exists is not attributable to him. He has made no contribution towards it, and, therefore, the hopes excited by his partisans have been wholly disappointed. The house and the country have had an ample opportunity of appreciating the right hon. gentleman's powers. The delusion which his advocates had spread no longer exists ; it is completely dissipated by the failure of this bill. To talk of concealing that failure from the country is quite nonsense ; for in this case the people themselves are behind the scenes, they are under the apron of this great puppet-show, and, therefore, it is ridiculous to speak of concealing the fact from those who know it as well as we do. The great points to be considered by the house, with respect to the motion I have the honour to submit, are these : first, has the bill to which that motion refers failed of producing the effect which it professed originally to have in view ? secondly, if it has failed, is it likely by its future operation to atone for that failure ? and, if not, thirdly, would the repeal of it be attended with any danger ? Now, as to the first point, it is admitted on all hands that the act has completely failed ; and it will be recollected that the effects promised from it were not, according to the language of its author and advocates, to be produced by degrees, but at once. The right hon. gentleman vaunted that it was only necessary to place him in power, to enable him to raise such an effective disposable army as should qualify the people not merely to defend

the country, but “to hurl back the proud insulting menaces of the enemy.” It has been observed that my right hon. friend on a former day treated this subject with much levity, which showed that he really did not consider the state of the country dangerous, or requiring such further measures of defence as he recommended. But, however important and grave the subject of our military defence may be, and however necessary it may be seriously to consider every point connected with it, I would appeal to the candour of gentlemen, whether, when the lofty promises of the right hon. parent of this bill were compared with the result, it was possible to avoid ridiculing his pretensions? Is not the failure of his promises obvious? If he promised to raise men, and could only raise money, did he perform his promise? No; not even so nearly as if he had promised to procure horses for the carriages of the cavalry in the field, and instead of that had furnished oxen to draw the baggage. Let me not then be told that the right hon. gentleman has performed his contract. In order to render his failure evident, it is only necessary to look at the returns on the table of the general state of the army, and of this additional defence act in particular: it will be seen in those returns that the army under the right hon. gentleman’s predecessor was not merely not improved by the boasted energy of the right hon. gentleman, but that it was rather deteriorated. I apprehend it will be said that no inquiry ought to be instituted under the administration of the right hon. gentleman, however necessary it was under his predecessor. It is, no doubt, convenient for the right hon. gentleman’s friends to maintain that doctrine at present; but if an inquiry were to take place, I have good reason to think that the right hon. gentleman’s administration would be found to be not less defective in the navy than in the army. I have heard it asserted that ships have been added to our naval force since the right hon. gentleman’s accession to power; but this I must positively deny. If, however, I was to demand an inquiry, to ascertain this fact, I suppose it would be refused, on the ground that the character of the noble lord at the head of the admiralty is such as to preclude the necessity of inquiry—that he is peculiarly entitled to confidence. But more of that noble lord hereafter. I shall now show, from a short review of the returns on the table, what the exertions of the right hon. gentleman have produced for the army, and how the coun-

try has reason to feel from the change which placed the right hon. gentleman in power.

In Jan. 1804 the whole of our army amounted to	-	-	-	-	191,099
In Jan. 1805 ditto	-	-	-	-	143,651
					<hr/>
Deficiency	-	-	-	-	47,448
					<hr/>
In Jan. 1804 the militia	-	-	-	-	109,947
In Jan. 1805 ditto	-	-	-	-	85,519
					<hr/>
Deficiency	-	-	-	-	24,428
					<hr/>
Total of army and militia in Jan. 1804	-	-	-	-	301,046
Ditto in Jan. 1805	-	-	-	-	229,170
					<hr/>
Deficiency	-	-	-	-	71,876
					<hr/>
The cavalry in Jan. 1804	-	-	-	-	17,177
Ditto 1805	-	-	-	-	21,223
					<hr/>
Increase	-	-	-	-	4,046
					<hr/>
The artillery in Jan. 1804	-	-	-	-	7,661
Ditto 1805	-	-	-	-	8,517
					<hr/>
Increase	-	-	-	-	856
					<hr/>
The foreign troops in 1804	-	-	-	-	13,710
Ditto 1805	-	-	-	-	21,028
					<hr/>
Increase	-	-	-	-	7,318

But, notwithstanding the increase in these departments, could it not surely be pretended that that in the foreign corps, for instance, added any thing to the disposable force of this country. What were 5,000 men, the amount of the addition at Ceylon, to the kind of force which it was the object of the additional force act to raise?—or how was the right hon. gentleman entitled to claim any merit from that addition? There was an augmen-

tation, it appeared, of our cavalry and artillery; but there was no actual reduction of the infantry of our regular army, amounting to 853 men; and any augmentation that has taken place in the different descriptions of force I have alluded to, or in the black troops of the West Indies, is attributable of right to the right hon. gentleman's predecessor. The measures which produced such augmentation were in operation before the right hon. gentleman came into office. But with respect to the act under consideration, no increase of our force at Ceylon, in the West or East Indies, has connection with this bill. The object of the bill was to raise a disposable force for England, and in that object it has not succeeded: the addition of 11,000 men to the whole of our military force, in the year 1804, which has been so much boasted of, is, I contend, owing to the provisions of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor, whose administration it was so much the fashion of the right hon. gentleman and his advocates to describe as milk and water, nauseous broth, &c. But I believe that many of those gentlemen would now be ready to retract their words. Whether they would or not I feel quite certain that I happened, with some other gentlemen on this side of the house, to be perfectly right in our opinion, that if the right hon. gentleman's predecessor should be removed, an administration much more deserving the character of imbecility, and something worse would follow. In this apprehension we were but too well founded: the right hon. gentleman had promised and performed nothing: the increase of the cavalry arose from the plan of raising men for rank; the raising of the German legion, and the augmentation of the artillery entirely belonged to the project of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor. The merit of the whole belonged to the noble lord now at the head of his majesty's councils—council I mean (a laugh). Whether that noble lord be at present really as well as nominally at the head of the council I do not mean to inquire, nor do I think it a matter of any consequence. My object is to show that the right hon. gentleman has disappointed the expectations which his assurances excited; that his abuse of his predecessor was unfounded, and that if he be enabled to send any force out of the country, or to perform any exploit, he owes the capacity of doing so to Lord Sidmouth. That the right hon. gentleman has derived no assistance from the only scheme for recruiting the army which he has proposed, will

be obvious from a view of the returns under this additional force act, which, in point of fact, was ludicrously unproductive. From the 5th of July to the 5th of February, this redoubted bill has only produced 1295 men in England and Wales, 266 of whom had deserted, or been discharged, leaving only 1029 effective men. This was the entire fruit of all these exertions of "local knowledge and sympathetic feeling," from which the right hon. gentleman proposed to obtain so much. For this amount of men had all the lords-lieutenants and deputy-lieutenants, bailiffs, overseers, constables, and parish officers, been put in motion; for this small number of recruits had little less than 40,000 persons been set to work. Out of the number I have mentioned which were raised under this act, it appears that 323 men have enlisted for general service, which is about four and a-half men for each county. Of this number, however, eighty-eight of which were raised for the parishes by the regular recruiting officers, thirty deserted, and thirty-three were discharged as unfit for service. In Ireland the return under this act is 1031 men. The zeal of that country was quite satisfied to get on a level with the produce of this; but here it thought proper to stop: not one, however, of these men has enlisted in the regular service—so much for Ireland. But to return to this country—it seems to be the case that the parishes have seldom, under this act, furnished a good soldier, and particularly in the manufacturing countries. The object of those officers was rather generally to get rid of vagrants, so that the greater number collected from the manufacturing counties were found to desert or to be unfit for service. Of the number raised by parish officers who enlisted for general service, fifty-two were from Lancashire, half of whom deserted; and what was the case with respect to Kent, where the right hon. gentleman's influence, one would suppose, must be powerful? Why, it furnished eleven men, all of whom deserted. But I would beg the particular attention of the house to the produce of the Cinque Ports, with which the right hon. gentleman is so particularly connected; where he has so much weight, both in his civil and military capacity; where he is said to be so much adored as a general and as a man. The Cinque Ports have produced one man; and no doubt he is an extraordinary man, if one could see him. He is, perhaps, a Milo or Hercules, and might be equal to the numerous produce of another district; as in the fable of

the lioness and the sow, where the lioness said to the latter, "what signifies your numerous brood? I have but one—*sed ille leo est*" (a loud laugh). I remember a story, that after an engagement, some persons inquired for Lord Donegall's regiment, anxious to know its fate; one soldier appeared, and exclaimed, "I am Lord Donegall's regiment." Perhaps this man from the Cinque Ports would be found *ipse agmen*. To be serious, I cannot but consider this bill, on the whole, as a disgrace to its author. Though I state this, I would not be understood to insinuate that whatever difference of opinion may prevail on particular points, we are not all of us of one heart and one mind, as to the necessity of providing effectually for the defence of this country. I mean then that this bill is a disgrace from its total inefficacy, and from its mode of attempting to be efficacious. It first goes into the parish as a beggar, and if unsuccessful in begging, it assumes the character of a bully; it tells the parish officer, "if you do not raise the men I desire, I would advise you to drop £20 in a certain place, or I will mulct you to double that amount." To those who complain so much of the parish officers not having done their duty under this bill, I would ask why the privy council did not set them a good example, by doing their duty? Had the privy council done so, the proclamation of Lord Hawkesbury would not have been delayed so long. From this instance of neglect in the privy council I should think it would be necessary in any future acts, where that council should have any duty to execute, that a clause should be inserted to inflict a penalty upon them for neglect. As to the double penalty threatened on the parishes which are deficient under this act, I think the collection of it would not be less difficult than oppressive. This bill was originally said to be for the purpose of expedition, yet, when we complain of its failure in this respect, we are told to wait, that it will still operate what it promised. We have heard a good deal lately of the preparation of carriages, for the speedy conveyance of soldiery, &c. Now, suppose any man came forward and said, "destroy all those vehicles; I have got one on a new principle, that will carry twenty men, at the rate of eight miles an hour." Suppose all those carriages were destroyed, and the boaster was relied on. Well, the twenty men get into his new carriage to set off to Windsor; some hours afterwards you meet him and the men at Kensington—on coming back?—no, but on his progress,

for he had absolutely got no further. Still the boaster would say, "give me time and I will yet accomplish the journey." What would you say to such a man? And yet exactly similar is the language which the right hon. gentleman holds to the house with regard to this bill. If a man were to persuade you to throw away your blunderbuss, and offer a gun of his invention in its stead, after hearing the man's praise of his invention, you attempt to fire it off—it misses fire—it burns priming. But still he urges you to keep it to your shoulder, assuring you, that it only hangs fire. This you might do for a little time; but what would you think of your man if his gun hung fire for six months, as this bill has done? Why really, sir, it is impossible to look at this bill in any way without laughing at it. The right hon. gentleman proposed that it should furnish a sword and a shield for the country—but it now turns out that this sword is only fit to be a soup ladle, and the shield a fish plate. The right hon. gentleman, however, and his friends have attempted to solace the country for the failure of this bill, by asserting that an addition has been made under his administration to the amount of our naval force; but this I positively deny. I assert that nothing has been added to our naval force, and that the navy itself is in a state much inferior to that in which Lord St. Vincent left it. When we come to examine the fact as to the fifty ships alleged to have been added to the navy under the present admiralty, we shall find that no less than thirty of them were old West-Indiamen; that one fifty-gun ship that was sent to the Downs was pronounced incapable of keeping the sea, and sent back into port; that another of the new vessels, the Weymouth, sent to convoy some merchantmen with which she should not part company, was, from her not being sea-worthy, incapable of making her way, and therefore kept back the convoy. It would also appear, on inquiry, that the present admiralty had ordered the purchase of some West-Indiamen in the river, which were reported to that board to be incapable of being made fit for use at the time of the purchase, and which were still lying in the river. Such are the ships of war which the present vigorous admiralty has added to our fleet, and they have, against that addition, reduced it by dismantling seven ships of the line and several frigates. By-the-by, as a sample of the wisdom of building vessels of war in merchants' dock-yards, which the right hon. gentleman once so

strongly recommended, all those dismantled vessels had been so built, and not one of them had been in use above seven years. The addition of men alleged to be made to the naval service, under the present admiralty, does not exceed five thousand. Will then any man attempt to compare the present first lord of the admiralty, in point of vigour and efficacy, with his noble and gallant predecessor? The comparison would be ridiculous, and yet the right hon. gentleman on the other side thought proper, on a former occasion, in reply to a question, in which no allusion of such a nature was naturally called for, to arraign the conduct and character of that highly deserving nobleman. I say it was not fit or becoming in the right hon. gentleman to do so. He had accused the noble lord without affording him any prospect of an opportunity of coming to trial or refuting the accusation. I know that the noble lord is ready to vindicate his character from any charge that can be brought against it, and that he pants for a full investigation of his conduct. If the present administration will not grant him that, and it should become necessary, from the circumstances of the country, to call the noble lord into the service—to raise his flag, with this imputation, cast by the right hon. gentleman, still lying on his character; what, I would ask, might the consequences be to the discipline of the fleet? I am afraid that in such a case the minister would be found to have incurred a deep responsibility to his country. The right hon. gentleman has thrown out a half charge against the noble lord, that he was disposed to tyranny, and what must be the consequence of such a representation upon the discipline and opinion of the sailors who might be placed under the command of the noble lord? Having said so much as to the matter and the effects of this bill, I beg to say a word upon the bill itself. In looking over it, every clause seems to be drawn up with a characteristic degree of confidence. It states, first, that whereas it is necessary to raise eighty-five thousand men; it proposes to raise that number within the year. In the next year it proposes to raise as many men as should be necessary to supply the deficiencies occasioned in the additional force, &c. by enlistments for general service. Afterwards, the bill becomes somewhat moderate, and promises to supply substitutes only for nine hundred men each year, which is the estimated amount of enlistment for general service, and the substitutes are not to exceed that number. But

the most curious part of this curious bill is, that the parish officers are restrained from procuring men beyond a certain distance from their respective parishes, while the regular recruiting officer, who is to provide the men in case the parishes fail, is at liberty to procure those men wherever he can get them. Another singular thing in the act is, that it is not specified what bounty the parishes shall be permitted to give, whether one pound or ten. This was left at the discretion of government, and therefore ministers may, if they please, to render this tax productive, levy the penalty of £20 or £40 according to their pleasure. But it is impossible these penalties can ever be levied, for all parishes in England are the delinquents. This defect in the bill I have just alluded to was, I recollect, corrected in the bill for Ireland, for in that the bounty was limited to two-thirds of the amount of the bounty settled for the regular army. If the right hon. gentleman should say that this money to be raised from the penalties is to be applied to the raising of men, I should reply that that would be no defence for the tax. The right hon. gentleman, indeed, must know that the objects to which it might be intended to apply any tax, would be no argument in favour of that tax. The friends of the right hon. gentleman are generally heard, I understand, to maintain, that although the act under discussion has completely failed, there is yet, in consequence of the respect and confidence due to the character of the right hon. gentleman, no ground for alarm, dismay, or inquiry, as to the circumstances in which we are placed. With respect to the claim of confidence, so confidently alleged, I can really see no ground to sustain it. We have heard much of the inefficient administration of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor, and I cannot perceive any particular difference that has arisen. Certainly the change is such as I cannot describe, nor can, I believe, any body else. At the time the administration of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor was on the decline, the general voice was for what was called a broad-bottomed administration. My right hon. friend on the opposite side (Mr. Canning) expressed a particular wish for the establishment of such an administration, and I firmly believe that he was sincere in that wish. Perhaps others were equally sincere upon that point, but not being acquainted with them I cannot say positively. However, the wish so often expressed by my right hon. friend and so many other gentlemen in

this house, and so strongly felt by the country at large, was disappointed. The right hon. gentleman went into office alone—but, lest the government should become too full of vigour from his vigorous support, he thought proper to beckon back some of the weakness of the former administration. He, I suppose, thought that the administration became, from his support, like spirits above proof, and required to be diluted; that, like gold refined to a certain degree, it would be unfit for use without a certain mixture of alloy; that the administration would be too brilliant, and dazzle the house, unless he called back a certain part of the mist and fog of the last administration to render it tolerable to the eye—(a laugh). As to the great change made in the administration by the introduction of the right hon. gentleman himself, I would ask, does he imagine that he came back to office with the same estimation that he left it? I am sure he is much mistaken if he fancies that he did. The right hon. gentleman retired from office because, as was stated, he could not carry an important question, which he deemed necessary to satisfy the just claims of the catholics; and in going out he did not hesitate to tear off the sacred veil of majesty, describing his sovereign as the only person that stood in the way of this desirable object. After the right hon. gentleman's retirement, he advised the catholics to look to no one but him for the attainment of their rights, and cautiously to abstain from forming a connection with any other person. But how does it appear now that the right hon. gentleman is returned to office? He declines to perform his promise; and has received, as his colleagues in office, those who are pledged to resist the measure. Does not the right hon. gentleman then feel that he comes back to office with a character degraded by the violation of a solemn pledge given to a great and respectable body of the people upon a particular and momentous occasion? Does the right hon. gentleman imagine either that he returns to office with the same character for political wisdom; after the description which he gave of the talents and capacity of his predecessors, and after having shown by his own actions that his description was totally unfounded? The house will recollect the high panegyric which he took occasion to pronounce upon the ability of Lord Hawkesbury. "That noble lord," the right hon. gentleman asserted, "was more competent to the office of secretary for foreign affairs

than any man on this side of the house, or in the country ;” my hon. friend (Mr. Fox), to whom he condescended to pay that compliment, alone excepted ; and yet he has now cashiered that noble lord as quite unfit for that office, and turned him down to the office of secretary for the home affairs.—Thus, although the right hon. gentleman has since undertaken to make such men ministers as he thought fit, he has set up no other rule for choosing them but his own will, he stands convicted in the recollection of the house and the country, of an utter incapacity to judge of the abilities of men. How, then, can the country confide in him, or the cabinet that he constructs ? If the right hon. gentleman be so incapable of forming a just estimate of the powers of men with whom he was so familiar as with Lords Sidmouth and Hawkesbury, how can he pretend to speak as to the competency of strangers ? How is he able to decide as to the choice of proper persons to fill the several offices connected with the domestic and foreign relations of government ? How can the right hon. gentleman be relied upon on these important points ? He has given the most glaring evidence of his utter incapacity and ignorance upon points which are essential in forming the mind of a great statesman, and with the notoriety of this evidence, he cannot, surely, so flatter himself as to fancy that his introduction to an administration can entitle that administration to the confidence of this house and the country. I will not go minutely into an examination of the characters of the subaltern ministers with whom he is connected, nor shall I call on him to explain what he means by counting noses in a cabinet. He seems to mean, that he would not enter into any cabinet where he would be obliged to count noses. But I rather think that at the time he was in a cabinet with my right hon. friend on the lower bench (Mr. Wyndham), and a noble friend of mine in another house (Lord Grenville), noses were counted ; and I can see no reason why the right hon. gentleman should pretend to be exempt from such counting, or should attempt to do it away altogether, unless, like the nose of the man at Strasburg, alluded to in *Tristram Shandy*, he imagines his own nose of much more importance than that of any other man. But to return to the right hon gentleman’s extraordinary claim to confidence, I maintain, that it is quite unfounded, particularly because, for the reasons I have stated, he has returned to office with a diminished character, and

a recorded conviction of incapacity. If, then, the right hon. gentleman be so convicted, and has no claim to confidence, where shall I find ground for it among his colleagues? As to the noble minister of war (Lord Camden), I presume he is no wiser than when I described his pretensions before. The noble lord (Castlereagh) who sits near the right hon. gentleman, stands in rather an odd way in the present administration, as he did in the last. From him, indeed, the cabinet can derive no brilliancy. The lord chancellor, I suppose, possesses the same knowledge in the present cabinet, as he did in the last. Here there was no change, and I presume that the right hon. gentleman has not yet discovered that that noble lord is ignorant of the law. Now, with respect to Lord Mulgrave, who is chosen to fill that office, the duties of which, according to the right hon. gentleman, no other man in England but Lord Hawkesbury and my hon. friend was competent to discharge, I should be glad to know in what the superiority of that noble lord consisted? That noble lord, I recollect, was at Toulon, into which he got through the treachery of some of the people of the town. Whether he managed ill or well there, it is not my business to inquire, nor is it material to ascertain. The noble lord has now got into a "state of comfortable security" (alluding to a phrase of the noble lord's in a despatch from Toulon), to which I cannot conceive him to have any claim on the score of ability. But there is certainly one thing in favour of the noble lord, and I say it without any partiality to him—he has not had any character from the right hon. gentleman—(a laugh). That certainly pleads for him, and gives him a decided advantage over Lord Hawkesbury, who had the misfortune of suffering so much by the character given of him by the right hon. gentleman. As the right hon. gentleman has not said a word to recommend the noble lord's ability for the foreign office, he stands some chance of being qualified for it. There is a noble duke in the cabinet also, who seems to be introduced as an ornament. This noble duke appeared ready to fill a place in any cabinet; no minister could be distressed for a person to fill up a vacancy in his cabinet, while this obliging personage was to be found. Indeed, however the reservoirs for the army have failed, there seems to be of late a reservoir for ministers which cannot fail; you have only to turn a cock, and out pops a minister. So far as I have gone, the comparison will

not be denied to be rather in favour of the feeble administration of the right hon. gentleman's predecessor. But then I am told, "there's the first lord of the admiralty—do you forget the leader of the grand catamaran project?" Are you not aware of the important change in that department, and the advantage the country is likely to derive from that change? Why, I answer, that I do not know of any peculiar qualifications the noble lord has to preside over the admiralty; but I do know, that if I were to judge of him from the kind of capacity he evinced while minister of war, I should entertain little hopes of him. If, however, the right hon. gentleman should say to me, "Where else would you put that noble lord? Would you have him appointed war minister again?" I should say, "Oh no, by no means—I remember too well the expeditions to Toulon, to Quiberon, to Corsica, and to Holland, the responsibility for each of which the noble lord took on himself, entirely releasing from any responsibility the commander-in-chief and the secretary-at-war. I also remember that which, although so glorious to our arms in the result, I still shall call a most unwarrantable project—the expedition to Egypt." It may be said, that as the noble lord was so unfit for the military department, the naval was the proper place for him. Perhaps there were people who would adopt this whimsical reasoning. I remember a story told respecting Mr. Garrick, who was once applied to by an eccentric Scotchman to introduce a work of his on the stage. This Scotchman was such a good-humoured fellow, that he was called "honest Johnny M'Cree." Johnny wrote four acts of a tragedy, which he showed to Mr. Garrick, who dissuaded him from finishing it, telling him that his talent did not lie that way; so Johnny abandoned the tragedy, and set about writing a comedy. When this was finished, he showed it to Mr. Garrick, who found it to be still more exceptionable than the tragedy, and of course could not be persuaded to bring it forward on the stage. This surprised poor Johnny, and he remonstrated. "Nay, now David," said Johnny, "did you not tell me that my talents did not lie in tragedy?" "Yes," replied Garrick, "but I did not tell you that they lay in comedy." "Then," exclaimed Johnny, "gin they dinna lie there, where the de'il dittha lie, mon?" Unless the noble lord at the head of the admiralty has the same reasoning in his mind as Johnny M'Cree, he cannot possibly suppose

that his incapacity for the direction of the war department, necessarily qualifies him for the presidency of the naval. Perhaps, if the noble lord be told that he has no talents for the latter, his lordship may exclaim with honest Johnny M'Cree, "Gin they dinna lie there, where the de'il dittha lie, mon?" (A loud laugh.) With regard to the military system, I must confess that I am a friend to it. The high bounties have been complained of; but this evil does not originate in the system itself, but from the abuse of the system. But when you expect a higher degree of discipline in the militia than is consistent with the nature of that service, when you carry the toops to a great distance from their homes, the bounty must be in proportion to the service required. I cannot conceive a more meritorious character than that of the men of property, who leave their homes and their comforts to bring to a proper state of discipline these regiments; but when you break your faith with the troops, when you put them in situations where it is impossible for them to refuse compliance with your unreasonable proposals, when you place them in the way of snapping their fingers in the faces of their officers, is it wonderful that a high bounty should be demanded? They have been entrapped into foreign service, they have been sent to Holland, to Egypt, and to other places, and it is natural that the bounties should rise to an extraordinary height. I would say one word more on the recruiting for rank. It does appear to me that there can be no objection to it, when you cannot easily procure men in any other way. In such a case, there can be no serious harm in ushering brave young men forward a little quicker than by the ordinary steps. Besides, the more the ranks of the army are filled by men of property and independence, the less jealousy need be entertained of it; and the more we may be disposed to regard it with affection. Another point which has been before insisted upon by my right hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham), is enlisting of men for a limited time. Considering the reasonable and advantageous nature of the proposition, it is astonishing to me that it yet remains to be done. There can be no doubt that his Majesty would consent to this, if advised to it by his ministers. Since the hon. gentleman's great plan has failed, why not attempt this one? This would undoubtedly procure men, and it comes recommended by every argument of humanity and justice. It is improper to enlist poor boys for

life, before they well know the nature of the engagements they are contracting. It is improper in a constitutional point of view, for it is right that those who fight for the constitution should have an opportunity of enjoying its benefits. What do they know of the constitution, according to our present military system? I do, indeed, believe that it is the best on the face of the earth; but it is so much the more unfortunate that our soldiers should be ignorant of its blessings. Suppose they were sent in their earliest years to a foreign country, and there told to fight for their country and constitution; they would be informed that they fought for the most glorious constitution, and the most excellent country in the world; but then they must be sensible that they are never to see it, and what in this case does its excellence signify to them? But if the soldiers were made sensible of the benefit of our constitution, and brought to indulge the hope of being permitted to enjoy its blessings; if they should be taught to look forward to the indulgence of one day sitting under the shade of this spreading tree, of being refreshed with the fragrance of its blossoms, and of tasting its fruit, then the great complaint of high bounties, and a want of men, would be done away. Now, sir, I would call the attention of one set of gentlemen particularly to this subject. I would request the country gentlemen to consider it *de novo*, and say, whether they can submit to the unjust tax that is imposed by this measure on the landed property of the country. Next, sir, I would address another set of gentlemen, those who supported the predecessor of the right hon. gentleman, for their concurrence in the motion which I am now about to propose. I gave that noble lord my support, feeble as it was, from a conviction that he was pursuing those measures which were best calculated to promote the interests of the country, and because he kept the right hon. gentleman out of office. My support had nothing interested in it; of that the noble lord is himself convinced, and so is he from whom I could not separate without causing a schism in my own heart. But I call upon the noble lord's friends, those whom he headed in opposition to this very measure, to support me on the present occasion. I ask, then, if the noble lord himself had not been placed in the other house, if no reconciliation had taken place, is there a man among his adherents who would not vote with me on this occasion? This bill only operates as an impost tax. At

this moment, when taxes are so heavy, and when it is desirable that they should be borne with patience and willingness, care is to be taken that they be imposed in a just and impartial manner. I have seen the day when the country gentlemen were more independent, and more powerful in the house. But there is another thing which is blamable in the conduct of the right hon. gentleman's administration. The country gentlemen have not only lost a great deal of their independence, but the peerage has been degraded. During the seventeen years in which the right hon. gentleman continued in administration, almost a moiety of the house of peers are of his creating. These, for the most part, were not created for any great public services, but merely for the convenience and assistance which they afforded to ministers. It is impossible that these things can go on much longer with safety to the constitution. I would not willingly dwell upon the circumstance of the preponderance which the right hon. gentleman has given to the commercial interests over the landed. I do not wish now to give any express opinion on that subject; but one thing is certain, that it has created an anomaly in this country—an assembly governing a large tract of territory (the East Indies), which is not subject to the people of this empire. I do entreat, that on this decision gentlemen will lift themselves above all considerations of party, and vote against this measure, which is found to be inefficient. This is the only way in which we may be sure of inspiring our friends with confidence, and our enemies with fear. This is the way in which we may expect to bring the present arduous contest with the most enterprising enemy with whom we ever had to contend, to a safe and honourable termination. The present question puts all this at issue. If gentlemen vote with me on this occasion, then our country will have a proper confidence in our own exertions. Europe will be satisfied that the hands and the hearts of the nation are engaged in our measures. Foreign nations who may join us, will be confident of firm and active support; and we may then with boldness bid defiance to all the efforts and machinations of the most ambitious, the most savage, the most powerful, and most unprincipled foe that ever attempted to disturb the peace of the world, to overturn the unrivalled constitution, and destroy the unequalled blessings of a great, a free, and a happy people. Mr. Sheridan concluded with moving, “That

the additional force act should be read." This being ordered to be entered as read, he moved the repeal of the said act.

Mr. Pitt and Lord Castlereagh replied.

Mr. Sheridan was not surprised that the noble lord had felt so forcibly that he and his friends had been called upon for some answer, and for their reasons for still supporting this bill. If they had given no answer, it might very fairly have been inferred that it was because they had nothing to say. In their answer, however, they took care to avoid the main objections, that it was unconstitutional in its principle, and that it had completely failed in its effect. The noble lord, however, conceived that the argument of the bill not having been fairly tried, was too strong for the great abilities of his hon. friend (Mr. Fox) to combat. He had forgotten, however, that the greatest part of that hon. gentleman's speech was entirely directed to this very point, and to prove that there was nothing to be hoped or expected from it. In Ireland, where it was said the bill had produced men, the fact was, that not a man had enlisted for general service, which was the professed object of the bill; and, in England, if the number raised by regimental recruiting was subtracted, it would appear that there had been no more than 787 men raised by the parish officers according to the provisions of the bill; and when it was considered that the promise went as far as raising 27,000 by this time. He then observed, that the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had complained that he had used harsh and strong language towards him; although he was a warm speaker in the house, he never harboured much personal animosity against any man; he supposed, however, the right hon. gentleman meant to contrast his language with his own singular gentleness and meekness of manners, his moderation, and total abstinence from sarcastic or biting remarks. He had stated that he (Mr. Sheridan) had wandered entirely from the subject; that he appeared to know nothing of the bill, except its title; and that he appeared to have hoarded up a collection of jests and sarcasms to throw out upon him. If his speech, however, had been so very ignorant and unworthy of the serious attention of the house, there was no occasion for the right hon. gentleman to jump up immediately to reply to it himself:—

"Nec Deus intersit, nisi Deo vindice nodus,"

was a maxim well understood by that gentleman. The right

hon. gentleman had attacked him for bringing charges against his colleagues, who were not in that house to defend themselves ; he had taken up the glove for the first lord of the admiralty. For his part, he had really a respect for that noble lord as a man of business, that did not pretend to more talents than he possessed ; but there were many differences between him and his predecessor in office ; he had no occasion to be at his desk by four o'clock in the morning examining abuses ; but, on the other hand, he went in a boat to superintend, or rather to judge with critical eye of the explosion of his own catamarans. At Walmer Castle, he and his right hon. friend had another Alexander's feast. Whether they had a Timotheus of their party report does not say ; the jolly dog, however, was not absent. There, like Alexander, " they seized a torch with fury to destroy ;" and, if they did not succeed, perhaps it was because there was no Thais at Walmer Castle.—But (continued Mr. Sheridan) the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) has thought fit to charge me with insincerity in the support I gave to the late administration. I say that this charge is contrary to the fact ; I gave my support to it with the utmost good faith, and I know that Lord Sidmouth has always been ready to acknowledge it. But, supposing I had not supported him with fidelity and firmness ; what then ? I never had professed to do so, either to that ministry or to this house. I approved of their measures, and I thought besides, that their continuance in office was a security against the right hon. gentleman's return to power, which I always considered as the greatest national calamity. If, indeed, I had, like him, recommended Mr. Addington to his Majesty and the public, as the fittest person to fill his high station, because it was a convenient step to my own safety, in retiring from a station which I had so grossly abused, and which I could no longer fill with honour or security ; if, having done so from such unwarrantable motives, I should have tapered off by degrees, from a promised support, when I saw the minister of my own choice was acquiring a greater stability and popularity than I wished for ; and if, when I saw an opening to my own return to power at a safer period than when I had left it, I had entered into a combination with others whom I meant also to betray, from the sole lust of power and office, in order to remove him ; and if, under the dominion of these base appetites, I had

then treated with ridicule and contempt the very man whom I just before held up to the choice of my sovereign, and the approbation of this house and the public, I should, indeed, have deserved the contempt of all sound politicians, and the execration of every honest private man: I should, indeed, have deserved to be told not merely that I was hollow and insincere in my support, but that I was mean, base, and perfidious.

For the motion 127; against it 267.

MAY 13, 1806.

REPEAL OF ADDITIONAL FORCE BILL.

Mr. Wyndham moved the order of the day, for the third reading of the additional force act repeal bill.

MR. SHERIDAN did not consider these constant insinuations of gentlemen on that side of the house, wishing to triumph over the measures or memory of a great man, who is now no more, as being at all justified by any part of their conduct. This was now the fourth debate which the house had had upon this bill. In the first, it seemed as if there had been a council held among the opposers of it, and that it had been resolved, "Let us attack all the measures that have been proposed or suggested, but let no man say a word about the bill." In that debate they therefore cautiously abstained from meddling with the bill itself. The second debate was begun by a military general (Sir James Pulteney), certainly of very high consideration. That general, however, entirely abstained from the military view of the question, and confined himself to its civil operation. In the third debate, both the civil and military questions were declined, and the argument was principally about the clause of refunding, which was the chief subject of the right hon. gentleman's argument upon the present occasion. If the gentlemen on the other side of the house had been twenty months before they could understand their own bill, they were not to triumph much even if they should find any omission in the present. He did not think it quite decent of the learned gentleman (Mr. Perceval) to say, that his right hon. friend had not read the bill that he proposed to repeal. Since he had made that assertion, he thought himself warranted in saying, that the bill had been drawn up in a manner so confused and unintelligible, that he could not but

consider the learned gentleman himself as the framer of it (*a laugh*) ; and from the little knowledge he discovered of that bill, he was only the more confirmed in his opinion. The learned gentleman, in ridiculing another system, said that some men had such an idea of the wonders that might be discovered, as to suppose a plough might be constructed to do its work by itself. Now, certainly the parish bill was not a machine of that construction, for with forty teams of horses, or rather with forty teams of *asses* (for so it seemed the parish officers were to be described), it did not work at all. The right hon. gentleman had warned his Majesty's ministers not to be intoxicated by the sweets of power, nor led away by the pleasure of triumphing over the measures of their rivals : he, therefore, thought that he had a right, from the " bed of roses " on which they supposed his Majesty's ministers to be placed, to warn the gentlemen on the other side of the house not to be too much mortified by their disappointment, nor to be so excessively soured by their change of situation, as to look on everything in an unfavourable light—(*a laugh*). The right hon. and learned gentleman had said, that if his right hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham) would but take time to consider, he was sure he would change his sentiments ; and yet the principal accusation against his right hon. friend had been, that he had taken too much time to consider, and that he delayed his measure too long. The noble lord (Castlereagh) had said, that if his wish had been to overturn the present government, the mode he should have taken would be to hold his tongue, and let them carry their own measures in such a way as must completely disgust the country. He believed, however, that that sort of hostility was not much dreaded by his Majesty's ministers, and that they would be better pleased that those gentlemen should hold their tongues, than that they should misrepresent, and endeavour to inflame the country by those misrepresentations. He believed that it would hardly be contended that there was a single parish in England that had raised its quota of men in obedience to the law ; and, therefore, when the learned gentleman spoke so much of the dignity of parliament requiring that the laws should be obeyed, he should have recollected that the parishes which violated the law, were those who raised men contrary to the provisions of the act ; and the parishes that did not violate the law, were those who raised no

men. In Leicestershire, it appeared, there was a wholesale crimp, by whose assistance that county procured its quota. There appearing to be some difference of opinion on this subject, between two representatives of that county, it had been stated, in the course of the debate on a former night, that one of them did not reside in the county he represented, and that probably his constituents would remember that on the next general election. He must compliment the constituents of the right hon. gentleman who made the observation for his residence among them. He wished, however, to know whether he had ever seen the place he represented (Tralee in Ireland), or whether he knew the name of one of his constituents? When it was seen, that in some districts a considerable number of men had been got, and in others none at all, it was impossible to suppose, that it was because there was a great deal of loyalty and zeal in one parish, or district, and none in that which immediately adjoined it. The reason was very different. In some cases it was represented as necessary, in order to support the characters of the ministers who brought in the bill, that some men should be got, and for that reason exertions were made to procure them, by means that were contrary to the law. In the parish of Marylebone, the same crimp who had raised men for other parishes, offered his services, but his offer was refused, as that parish did not wish to violate the law. In St. Anne's parish, however, they were not so nice, and they got some men. [He then read the advertisement of the parish of St. Anne, which began with "The largest bounty in England for recruits," and ended with the following postscript, "No *Irishmen*, Germans, or boys, will be taken."] In St. Luke's also, they raised some men, by adding £12 to the government bounty. As to getting men at the bounties fixed by government, it was impossible. If government were to want a levy of cavalry horses, and would allow no more than £5 or £10 to be given for them, the parishes might answer, that it would be as easy for them to raise as many elephants, rhinoceroses, or any other strange animals, as to get good horses for such a price. It was the same thing in the case of the recruits. There was an utter impossibility of procuring them for the bounties stated in the act. He felt convinced that the right hon. framer of the bill would not (if he were now living) support the bill. When he himself moved for the repeal of it last session, that right hon.

gentleman expressly stated, that if upon trial it failed to produce the men, he should himself move for the repeal of it. The act had completely failed, and in order to give the appearance of its having partially succeeded, scandalous measures were resorted to by the government. He considered the letter of Lord Hawkesbury, of the 31st of December, as a most atrocious act, which the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) would never have consented to. That letter of instruction allowed the men to be raised contrary to law, and gave the recruiting serjeants a privilege to libel the regular army, and point out this additional force as much more eligible to enlist in. As the right hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Perceval) had suggested a form for acts of parliament to run, he also should name a title which would have been more fitting for the additional force act than that which it had borne. It should rather have been called, an act "for degrading the magistracy of the country, for raising the bounties, perverting the public morals, destroying the regular army, and encouraging mutiny and desertion." Such an act should be immediately repealed as a great evil. If he saw a person afflicted with a wen, or a stranguary, or any other disorder, and spoke of curing him, he did not think he could fairly be asked, what other disorder he proposed to substitute in its place? Or if he were to see a mad dog in the street, he should conceive himself justified in killing it, without providing any substitute for it, and this was precisely his feeling with respect to the present bill. The famous letter of Lord Hawkesbury began by stating, "Whereas information has been received that the additional force bill has generally failed, on account of the negligence and supineness of the parish officers." He had read all the correspondence on the subject, and he would venture to say, that the Earl of Essex was the only person who gave such information. The letter, therefore, began with a violation of truth (in saying violation of truth, he did not allude to the noble lord personally, but to the act of the government), and proceeded to order the violation of the law by increasing the bounties. Colonel Campbell, who acted under the directions of the secretary of state, gave notice, that there was no occasion for being very nice in the manner the men were raised, so they were got. It was also a subject worthy of serious observation that, by the law the recruit was obliged to take an oath that he was a native of the

parish or district for which he served. Now, in the manner those recruits were raised in distant parts of the country, it was necessary that perjury should be added to a violation of the law before such recruits could be received. He then concluded, by utterly denying that he or his hon. friends acted at all through hatred of the memory of the great and illustrious man who framed the bill. "As for me," said Mr. S. "there were many who flattered him more than I, and some who feared him more; but there was no man who had a higher respect for his transcendent talents, his matchless eloquence, and the greatness of his soul; and yet it has been often my fate to have opposed his measures, I may have considered that there was somewhat too much of loftiness in his mind which could not bend to advice, or scarcely bear co-operation. I might have considered that, as a statesman, his measures were not adequate to the situation of the country in the present times; but I always thought his purpose and his hope was for the greatness and security of the empire. Let not his friends then suppose they are dealing fairly with the house, in representing that we seek a triumph over the memory of that illustrious man, when we now move the repeal of a measure which he would himself have repealed if he had lived. A right hon. gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce), who had many opportunities of knowing his intentions, has told you that he intended to repeal it if it failed in getting men. It has failed. Let the failure of the measure be buried in his grave, and never remembered in his epitaph."

JULY 11.

THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS.

Sir Henry Mildmay moved the thanks. Lord Ossulton the previous question.

MR. SHERIDAN said, although I could not have remained wholly silent during this debate, yet I wished to have heard the sentiments of others before I delivered my opinion; but what has fallen from two hon. gentlemen who have recently spoken, has induced me to abandon my original design, and to avail myself of this opportunity to solicit the attention of the house. I am desirous to abstain from all party allusions, and never wish to censure those who, from early attachment, and long habit, feel a peculiar ardour of affection for the late right hon. gentle-

man (Mr. Pitt); but whether the right hon. general belongs to that number, I will not pretend to determine. I think that gallant officer was not perfectly correct, when he ascribed the impassioned exclamation of the late minister to his regret that the affairs of the empire should be consigned to the present servants of the crown: that eminent person, no doubt, fully expected that his own companions in office would remain in power, and under this painful reflection, his anxiety for his country is fully explained; for what would have become of it in such hands is sufficiently obvious. I have not yet expressed my views of this military subject; but it may easily be expected of me to declare, that the defence of the kingdom ought not to be entrusted exclusively to a regular army, and history has instructed us that there never was a country which preserved its liberties that exposed itself to this danger; nor, sir, would I, on any occasion, give my vote to deduct one man from the great constitutional force—the militia. Acting under the influence of similar principles, I have always resisted the compulsory bills, stating it to be the undoubted prerogative of his Majesty to select any individuals from the great body of the community, to place them in the ranks of the regular army, and to send them to any part of the kingdom. It is true the judges and some public officers were excepted, but the whole of such a bill should become a dead letter. It is not necessary that I should now state my opinion on that subject; but I wish distinctly to be understood, that with regard to the volunteers I never shall vary my sentiments. I did before move the thanks of the house to that meritorious body, and in so doing, I gave them a pledge of the spirit in which I would support their interest, character, and dignity. If, sir, they deserved this mark of public feeling, merely for the promptitude with which they stepped forward for the defence of the state, how much higher are their claims to merit, when they have done that service which they then only intimated a disposition to perform? With respect to the drill serjeants, and some other minor matters of regulation, it may be eligible to leave these in the care to which such subjects are officially committed. But I think the reports of the military inspectors have been treated with a degree of levity which is neither candid or decent. Are we to say, that the general officers are chargeable with misrepresentation, in order to deceive government, to lull ministers

into a consciousness of security which is fallacious? or are we to presume that, as honourable men, as gentlemen and officers, they do render the accounts now upon your table? If these be accurate, ought the volunteers to be undervalued? Sir, it is a fact most notorious, that nothing made so strong an impression on the French government during their hostile designs upon this country, as the energy manifested by the volunteers: the effect was equally felt by Buonaparte and his minister Talleyrand: they saw, with mortification, that the nation would be indebted for its independence to its own valour. The people of England did not prostrate themselves and petition the sovereign, "O king, hire us an army, and we shall be protected;" but they took the weapon into their own hands, to wield it in their own cause. I fairly say, that as the motion is now worded, I cannot vote for it. I shall therefore, before I sit down, submit to the house a middle proposition, not liable to the same objections with the original proposition. What were the motives of the hon. gentleman in the form in which they have shaped this motion, I would not prejudge; but they may very correctly be ascertained by the spirit in which they receive the variation I shall suggest.

What were the motives of the hon. gentlemen in the form in which they have shaped this motion, I would not prejudge; but they may very correctly be ascertained by the spirit in which they receive the variations I shall suggest. The passage to which I object is retrospective; the language is, "it is necessary now to declare;" why is it "necessary now," unless something has been done indicative of a different temper to that which the motion is intended to exhibit? It is admitted on all sides, that if my right hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham) has intimated anything at all injurious to the volunteers, it is confined to mere expressions. In his acts (a cry of hear hear! occasioned some pause), in his acts, I repeat, it is admitted on all sides by those who have spoken (and those who only tell me their sentiments by this sort of clamour, it is not possible I should understand), he has done nothing which can justly be deemed prejudicial. But has no dexterity been employed to pervert his meaning?—Have no artifices been resorted to, to proclaim what gentlemen on the other side would affect to suppress and to conceal? Sir, I will frankly confess, that formerly I have had differences with my right hon. friend on this subject. He, perhaps, in the heat of

debate, and in the ebullition of wit, used stronger terms than his deliberate judgement would have employed ; and possibly, having altered his situation, he is not disposed to show that this change has governed his opinions. I have these before me in review, when I observe that no enmity has been excited between the regulars and the volunteers, by the rank the latter have acquired ; as far as my experience extends, they have treated each other with decorum and respect ; if any superiority may be claimed by the officers of the line, the same sort of precedence may be demanded by the privates of the volunteers, so that there is a kind of balance which precludes discontent. The motion I should wish now to substitute, would be similar to another to which I have already referred : “ That the thanks of this house be given to the several corps of yeomanry and volunteers, for the promptitude and zeal with which they have stood forward for the defence of the country in the moment of public danger.” This motion was acceded to without a dissentient voice ; and I am not aware how those who concurred in that proposition can, consistently, resist that which I shall presently recommend. It has been said, that rumours are abroad that the government designs to discourage the volunteers : these vague reports, however, were met by a distinct avowal, by my right hon. friend, that the measures to which he has resorted will increase, and cannot diminish, their numbers. Whether the training bill is calculated to have this beneficial effect, it is not my present business to inquire : but, be they just, or incorrect, rumours have prevailed, and an idea has gone forth, that administration is unfriendly to the volunteer system ; and no more successful means can be employed to prevent any misconstruction with regard to the intentions of ministers and parliament, than a vote of thanks, couched in terms expressive of the sense entertained of the important services of the volunteers. Again they say, “ why do you not thank the navy and army as well as the volunteers ? ” Sir, the army and navy cannot be insensible of the estimation in which they are held by this house, and by the country in general : and they are sufficiently and properly convinced of their own importance ; they know we cannot dispense with the protection they afford. The volunteers are not so firmly persuaded that they receive the applause they deserve, and, perhaps, they feel too diffident an opinion of their own utility. Besides,

the army and navy cannot disband themselves at pleasure; the volunteers may, from some real or supposed provocation; and this is the serious evil I am most solicitous to avoid: by the vote I have proposed, all misunderstanding will be prevented. From these considerations I am very desirous that the hon. member should withdraw his motion. I think he must see that the effect of it, in its present shape, must be to attach a stigma on ministers; and what is yet more objectionable, on the house itself, for the legislative regulations it has already adopted, applicable to the military system. If the intention be purely, simply, and honestly to impart to the volunteers a conviction of the favourable sentiments of this house towards them, let them present the motion in a point of view which will induce this side of the house to concur with them; if under this ostensible design they have other concealed motives, it will be in vain to expect this uniformity. So little do I disapprove of the general character of the motion, that I should have been happy to have seen it introduced as a preamble to one of the bills of military regulation, brought in by my hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham). Perhaps the style adopted when the thanks of the house were voted to Sir Charles Gray and Sir John Jervis, on the 20th of May, 1794, would not be objectionable, "This house continues to retain a cordial sense of the zeal and spirit of the yeomanry and volunteers." Whatever may be the result of the proceedings of this night, I will confidently assert that, in any former period in the history of this country, there never was a body of men who deserved more the gratitude of the nation, who merited more highly its love, respect, and veneration; and nothing can be more becoming the house of commons, than, by a solemn act, to record this effusion of public sentiment.

For the previous question 69; against it 39.

FEBRUARY 20, 1807.

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

MR. SHERIDAN rose, pursuant to notice, to move that the order for the appointment of a committee to consider the petition upon this subject should be discharged, with a view to move for the further postponement. The right hon. gentleman was so much of opinion, from what had passed when last this question

was before the house, that a motion for further postponement would be immediately assented to if required, that he confessed he heard with considerable surprise of the intention to oppose the motion, particularly on the part of the noble lord (Folkstone) by whom a similar proposition was last submitted to the house. Had he happened to have stood in the predicament of being unable to bring forward such a motion, he really thought that the noble lord would have been ready to propose it himself; at least, he felt that he would be warranted, from the noble lord's former language and conduct, in relying upon his readiness to second him in this proposition. Of the grounds of this reliance, and the justice of his opinion, the house would be able to judge from a short review of the history of the case. When the petition before the house was presented, which was about the 23rd of December, the first or second day after any petitions could be received, the noble lord announced the desire of the petitioners that the earliest day possible should be appointed for the ballot, and that they were ready at once to go before a committee. Accordingly, the 30th of January was appointed; but, notwithstanding the declaration of the noble lord, and the publicly proclaimed resolution of the petitioners, he received, not many days afterwards, a note from the noble lord, stating, that it was through a mistake he presented the petition so soon, and that the parties were not ready to go into the investigation on the day originally appointed. The noble lord, therefore, requested his consent to a further postponement, as a matter of personal accommodation to himself, and a matter of justice towards the petitioners, who would otherwise suffer through his error. Having had an acquaintance with the noble lord, he was certainly disposed to accommodate him, but yet he felt himself bound, before he complied with the noble lord's request, to consult the opinion of his friends, and they decidedly objected to the delay required. However, when he came down to the house upon the day appointed for the motion, the noble lord applied to him again; and again asking his consent to the motion as a personal favour, he did grant it. So far as he had gone, he believed the noble lord could not say, that what he had stated was not strictly true. But as to the conversation which took place the day the noble lord's motion of postponement was agreed to, he held in his hand a document which contained it. He knew

that he could not distinctly allude to the evidence he had adduced, because, according to the orders of that house, strangers were understood to be excluded. But somehow a memorandum of what was said on the day alluded to, did find its way into print, and certainly it was detailed with considerable accuracy. In looking over this memorandum, it would be seen that all the arguments advanced by the noble lord made against his motion, and of course it was a very natural inference that the motion owed its success to something else. That something was his concurrence; and he recollected very well—as it appeared from this memorandum—that he mentioned at the time his apprehension that the 24th of February would go too near the circuits, which would render a farther postponement necessary, as his counsel would be out of town. Such was his statement then, and it was only upon the express condition that farther delay would be acceded to if necessary, that he gave his assent to the noble lord's motion. This he could aver from his own memory, but there were not less than twenty or thirty gentlemen present, who also heard the noble lord, and who could bear testimony to the noble lord's observation. The noble lord did state upon that occasion, that when he mentioned the 24th of February, he was not aware that the circuits were so near, and that if that day should in consequence become inconvenient, there could be no objection to a farther postponement. This declaration the noble lord was understood to have made by several friends near him. The house, he had no doubt, would agree with him in thinking, that when the petitioners urged the noble lord to move for the former postponement, on the ground that they did not wish for the trial on an early day, that the noble lord was not aware of the resolution relative to a speedy trial, which these petitioners had just before published, and in all probability the noble lord was equally unaware of this circumstance, that the counsel for the petitioners did not go any circuit, while those retained on his part did. But of this the petitioners were fully apprised, and they would fain urge him to trial without the advantage of his counsel. It might be asked, why did he not make this proposition of postponement somewhat sooner? He would candidly answer, because, as he stated before, when this subject was under consideration, he really did not think the petition would be persisted in, but from what he had heard of their proceed-

ings within the last few weeks, he was led to believe that his opponents were much more sanguine even than, he suspected, and that they were resolved to persevere. Upon the whole, however, the right hon. gentleman could not persuade himself to suppose that that house would call on any gentleman to enter upon such an important investigation stripped of the aid of his counsel; and he could not help observing, that the attempt to take advantage of him in this instance, was not a very liberal return for the manner in which he gave way to the noble lord's motion upon a former occasion. But his manner of acting towards the noble lord and his friends in this transaction was that which, perhaps, few men would be ready to imitate.

Ayes 162; noes 12.

MARCH 17.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

Lord Percy moved for leave to bring in a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in the West Indies.

MR. SHERIDAN having anxiously expected that the bill passed the preceding night was the preamble of the ultimate measure of emancipation, thought he should be guilty of the grossest inconsistency in giving a silent vote on the present question. With these sentiments he need scarcely say, that the noble earl had his thanks for having directed the attention of the house to this important subject, even at that early period. The noble earl's statement had been misrepresented. He had never proposed to enfranchise the living negroes; his measure, as he understood him, was to commence with infants born after a period, which would remain a matter of future parliamentary discussion. The planters were entitled to fair dealing on this subject. If the house meant to say, that by abolishing the slave trade they had done all that duty demanded, and that they would leave the emancipation of the slaves to the hazard of fortuitous circumstances, let them be explicit, and say so; but if there lurked in any man's mind a secret desire to proceed in that business, a secret conviction that more ought to be done than had been done, it was unmanly, it was dishonourable, not to speak out. For one, he would boldly declare that he had farther views; he hoped that the young nobleman who had done his feelings so much credit, by the proposition which he had that evening made, would

stand to his ground. If he persevered in the pursuit of his object with the same zeal as his right hon. friend opposite had done, he had no doubt that he would meet with the same success. An hon. baronet had talked of a cloven foot ; he pleaded guilty to the cloven foot, but, of the man who expressed pleasure at the hope of seeing so large a portion of the human race freed from the shackles of tyranny, it should rather be said, that he displayed the pennon of an angel than the cloven foot of a demon. It was true no immediate connection existed between the abolition of the slave trade, and the abolition of slavery, but the same feelings must be roused by the consideration of both questions ; and he who detested the one practice must also detest the other. He did not like to hear the term “ property ” applied to the subjects of a free country. Could man become the property of man ? A colony emanating from the free constitution of England must carry with it the principles of that constitution, and could no more shake off its well known allegiance to the constitution than its allegiance to the sovereign. He trusted that the planters might be induced to lead the way on the subject of emancipation ; but he cautioned the house against being sanguine on this subject. Were the planters themselves always resident on the islands, he should have greater hopes ; but it was not probable that because cargoes of human misery were no longer to be landed on their shores, that because their eyes were to be no longer glutted with the sight of human suffering, or their ears pierced with the cries of human distraction, in any further importation of negroes, that the slave-drivers would soon forget their fixed habits of brutality, and learn to treat the unhappy wretches in their charge with clemency and compassion. Slavery would not wear itself out ; it would become more rigid unless the legislature became more vigilant, and reminded the planters of the new duty that had fallen upon them, of rearing the young slaves in such a manner, that they might be worthy of freedom. Adverting to the quotation from Gibbon, he contended, that the slavery of the West Indies was unlike any other slavery ; it was peculiarly unlike the slavery of ancient days, when the slaves frequently attained to the highest dignities ; Æsop, Terence, and Seneca, were slaves. Was there a possibility that any of the unfortunate negroes in the West Indies should emulate such men ? It might be dangerous to give freedom to the slaves in a mass,

but that it was not dangerous to give it to them in detail, was sufficiently proved by a little pamphlet that had been put into his hands the preceding night, in which it was stated, that a Mr. David Barclay, to his eternal honour be it spoken, who had himself been a slave-owner in Jamaica, and who, regretting that he had been so, on a bequest of slaves being made to him, emancipated them, caused them to be conveyed to Pennsylvania, where they were properly instructed, and where their subsequent exemplary conduct was the general theme of admiration. With this fact before him, should he be told that he must give up all hope of abolishing slavery ! No, he would never give it up. He would exclaim with the poet, in the words of the motto of the pamphlet which he had mentioned,

“ I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To fan me when I sleep, and tremble when
I wake, for all that human sinews, bought
And sold, have ever earn'd.”

Sir C. Pole moved that the house be counted, and only 35 members being present, it was adjourned.

MARCH 18.

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

Lord H. Petty moved that the Westminster Petition be now taken into consideration.

MR. SHERIDAN rose and said, that he was aware that, standing in the situation he did, he was entitled to comment, to remark on, and to sum up all the evidence that had been adduced in support of the allegations contained in the petition now before the house ; he should, however, waive that right ; the evidence was in the hands of every member of that house, and he was not anxious, if he could do so, to add to the impression testimony of such a nature must have already produced ; he would content himself with one remark, which was, that that evidence, weak and futile as it was, did not say more to its own confusion than would have been proved by witnesses unimpeachable, which he (Mr. Sheridan), had the house thought it necessary, was ready to bring forward. As an instance, he should mention merely Mr. Weatherhead himself. When an inquiry was made as to his services in the navy, he confessed himself not quite satisfied with the return of the navy office. A noble lord (Folkestone)

was equally dissatisfied, but upon different grounds. The noble lord seemed to think that this Mr. Weatherhead had been calumniated, and accordingly the noble lord moved for a return at once more exact and comprehensive. What had been the issue of this attempt to rescue the character of this Mr. Weatherhead from this supposed slander? Why, in truth, no more than this: that he, Mr. Weatherhead, had not served in one ship only, but in twelve or thirteen, that he had continued in one a year, in another ship three months, in a third a month, in a fourth three weeks, and in a fifth *five days*; running, as it were, the gauntlet of the British navy; for it appeared that he had been actually guilty of desertion from each ship, though in the first return it appeared that he had deserted but once. But it was not more difficult to fix the station of this naval officer to a certain ship, than to fix his birth to a certain place; he had the singular good fortune to be born at a number of different places—(a laugh); he was *first* at Newcastle, he was born at Morpeth, and after some other birth he was *brought forth* in London—(a loud laugh). But there was another slight ground of objection to the character of this witness; in the month of September, 1803, he petitioned to be examined for a lieutenancy, and to the recommendatory certificate of the different captains under whom he served, there was but one objection, namely, that they were all discovered to be *forgeries*. He was not anxious to press upon the house the gross and flagrant contradictions and absurdities in the evidence they had heard; he did not wish to expose the miserable wretches to the just rigour of the honest indignation they had so universally excited; but he would put it to the feelings of that house, whether it was not necessary to inquire how far those wretches had been the tools of a conspiracy; how far it was the duty of any agent or agents to inquire into the nature of the testimony and the *character* of the witnesses, more especially in a case where this evidence went directly to affect the seat of a member of parliament, to mention nothing of the danger of propagating groundless slander against a privy councillor. It was for the house to consider how far the agents are responsible for employing wretches as substantial evidence, whose character they might have learned (had they been ignorant of it) in the neighbourhood of Bow-street, Hatton-garden, and Newgate; but he should abstain, he would keep his word with the house and not enter into any

remark upon the evidence. He had an idea of submitting some motion for the purpose of investigating the charge of conspiracy ; he should, however, in compliance with the suggestions of those right hon. friends whose superior judgment was with him decisive, give way, and should now, through a sense of delicacy, retire, leaving his cause with confidence to the house, assured as he was, that the house would, with becoming dignity, assert its own character and honour, and, in doing so, preserve his.

Mr. Sheridan immediately withdrew.

AUGUST 7.

THIRD READING OF IRISH ARMS BILL.

MR. SHERIDAN declared it was a matter of astonishment to hear the question called for by something like a general voice. He had noticed the motion of his hon. friend, and the ability with which he had supported it, and he had noticed most attentively the eloquent and unanswerable arguments of his hon. and learned friend (Sir A Pigot), and many other hon. gentlemen ; he certainly did think that something would have been said in answer to them ; he certainly did think that something like an answer would have been attempted ; he certainly did think that gentlemen on the other side would have condescended to have said something in favour of their own measure, after it had been almost overwhelmed with such a torrent of argument. But if ever Ireland was at once injured and insulted, it was that night ; he conceived the silence of ministers on this occasion to be an injustice to the measure itself, whilst it evinced a total disregard of the gentlemen who spoke upon the subject, and through them insulted and outraged the feelings of the people of Ireland. The gentlemen who spoke upon the subject, pleaded the cause of the injured constitution of Ireland. They pleaded that cause in the most moderate and persuasive terms, and yet the most sullen silence prevailed throughout the whole body of his Majesty's ministers ; they gave a blank instead of argument. Even on the introduction of the bill, when it was unavoidable to say something in support of the measure, the attorney-general did not pretend to say that he knew any thing of the existence of any facts, the existence of which was necessary to justify the adoption of such a measure ; no, but he had heard something by rumour somewhere, about the existence of some

such circumstances. The chancellor of the exchequer was equally ignorant, but he had also heard of something that he believed had a strong tendency to resemble insurrection. Then, with respect to the bill itself, when he looked at it, compared it with that which had lately passed the house, he must say that if the former seemed odious in its form and substance, this was ten thousand times more so—it was really most abominable. But at the same time, as if it were meant to make the measure both odious and ridiculous, it was so constructed, as that it would plunder the people of their arms, and put down the trade of a blacksmith. Nothing like a blacksmith was to exist in Ireland, lest he might possibly form something like a pike. If ever there was an instance in which the liberties of a loyal people were taken from them, and they were thereby tempted to become disloyal, it was the present. Indeed, from the general spirit with which the bill was framed, he thought there was something still wanting, and he should propose to add a clause by way of rider to this bill, making it high treason for any man to communicate either of these bills to Napoleon Buonaparte, emperor of the French, lest he should conceive them to be direct invitations to him to visit that part of his Majesty's empire. He had already noticed the silence of the gentlemen opposite him; but if they should now think proper to drop a word or two, when he considered the high political character, the extraordinary virtue, and the vastly extensive powers of argument of those gentlemen, he should think himself highly honoured indeed, if they should deign to take the most trifling notice of anything that fell from him. He now happened to recollect what was said by a right hon. gentleman, to whose opinions they all deferred (Mr. Grattan), that notwithstanding he voted for the present measure with all its defects, rather than lose it altogether, yet that gentleman said, that he hoped to secure the reversionary interest of the constitution to Ireland. But when we saw that the constitution was suspended from the year 1796 to the present period, and that it was now likely to be suspended for three years longer, the danger was that we might lose the interest altogether; when we were mortgaged for such a length of time, a foreclosure might at last take place. But what had been done for the protection of Ireland? an experienced military officer, the secretary of state for that country, had been sent up the Baltic. (The chancellor of

the exchequer said, across the table, “no, secretary to the lord lieutenant.”) Mr. Sheridan then said, he felt himself highly honoured indeed by that correction of a supposed error. If the right hon. gentlemen meant to say, that the worthy baronet (Sir A. Wellesley) was too insignificant, he would defend the hon. baronet against the imputation of that right hon. gentleman. The baronet was secretary to the representative of his Majesty, and a military man ; he was sent up the Baltic, and you garrisoned Ireland with two arbitrary acts of parliament.

AUGUST 8.

PUBLICANS' BILL.

MR. SHERIDAN moved the second reading of this bill. He could adduce, he said, instances of the most atrocious oppression practised by the magistrates on individuals of this trade ; he did not say designedly, but from carelessness and inattention. All that he wished was, that, when a publican was charged with an act which was to be esteemed sufficient to deprive him of his license, he should be informed of the nature of the crime imputed to him, and he should be heard in his defence ; not that he and his family should be deprived of their livelihood by a whisper. This, he maintained, was not a situation in which an Englishman should be placed. It had, he believed, been objected against him (Mr. Sheridan), that this was the mode he had taken of canvassing Westminster. How truly this was alleged might be gathered from this simple fact, that one of the first measures moved by him in parliament was of a similar nature. Shortly after the riots in 1780, he himself originated a measure against the Westminster justices, in which he had the satisfaction of being supported by a most respectable minority. Shortly after this, the late Duke of Northumberland put an additional number of gentlemen into the commission of the peace, among the rest, himself (Mr. Sheridan). General Fitzpatrick, Lord R. Spencer, and other gentlemen on that side of the house, finding, during the immediately succeeding election for Westminster, that the publicans, through fear of the magistrates, all of whom were in the interest of government, could not be induced to open any houses in favour of Mr. Fox, though they had not previously qualified themselves as magistrates, they resolved to do so, and immediately advertised, promising their protection to such

publicans as should act impartially by opening their houses for the independent candidate. In this determination they could only find one of the existing magistrates who would join them, and add his name to the corps. Gentlemen, Mr. Sheridan remarked, might, if they pleased, think it a subject of congratulation, and that it conferred honour and respectability on the magistracy of Westminster, that not more than one man could be found among them to add his name to a resolution expressive of their determination to act fairly and impartially. He had only stated this, however, to show that the present was not an idea which he had now taken up for the first time. He had prepared a bill on the subject while he was treasurer of the navy; and so far was it from being an election trick on his part, that he did not mention the subject during the last election till the 12th day of the poll, whereas, had he meant it as a theme through which to court popularity, he would have set out with it from the beginning. If it was desired, he should be ready in the committee to go into a string of cases, the substantiating of any one of which he was convinced, must render it impossible for gentlemen of honour, feeling, or humanity, to have a doubt on the propriety of what he proposed. He proceeded to state the case of a woman, whose father and mother had been for sixty years in one house, in which they had uniformly maintained an unblemished character. She had succeeded to her parents, and supported in it, with the same propriety, a family of seven children, five of whom were entirely dependent on her industry. Being summoned before the magistrates, and informed that they could not renew her license; on her attempting to remonstrate, the only satisfaction she could procure was, “woman, you have had your answer.” Her license was accordingly withdrawn, and she and her family were now reduced to a state of extreme poverty and distress. This case was not unknown to, and had attracted the commiseration of a noble lord and right hon. gentleman; but he (Mr. Sheridan) denied that it was consistent with the constitution of this country that any man, in any profession, was to be told, that at the discretion of any one man, he and his family were to be deprived of their livelihood, and reduced to misery. He had, he declared, thirty instances of a similar kind, which he should, if required, bring forward in the committee. He had several instances too, of persons having been deprived of their licenses for voting for

Sir Francis Burdett, for Middlesex: they had even been told that this was the reason; and, he would ask, were publicans, at the will of a magistrate, to be deprived of the free exercise of the elective franchise more than the other inhabitants of this country? He alluded to another case which had occurred at Fulham, where a house, remarkable for the usual decorum of its keeper, had been deprived of the license, merely because, on one occasion, a few Welsh girls, returning to their own country, had been indulged with a fiddle and a hobble. These were arbitrary powers, which, he submitted, were not fit to rest with one or two individuals, without the person accused being acquainted with the charge against him, and allowed to defend himself. Neither, he maintained, was it even then fit that they should exist without appeal. All he asked was, that every person so accused should have the charge against him furnished to him in writing, and that he should be heard in his defence; and, afterwards, that he should have it in his power to appeal to the quarter sessions. He could not think it possible but that the magistrates themselves must be pleased that an appeal lay from their decision. If not actuated by personal motives, the knowledge of such appeal must be consolatory to their feelings: all he wished at present was, that the bill should extend to Middlesex and Surrey. He confessed that he had received letters which would do more than cover the table, containing similar complaints from every part of the country, so that he might be fortified in maintaining that the alteration should extend throughout. But still, high as was the respect in which he held Mr. Graham, and one or two others of the Westminster and Middlesex magistrates, he could not so far shut his eyes as to put them on a level with the independent country magistrates. The former held their places, for which they received an emolument, at the will and pleasure of his Majesty's ministers; while the latter exercised a gratuitous and burthensome duty. There was another subject, which he had alluded to elsewhere, and before an auditory far more numerous than that which he had now the honour to address, namely, the power exercised by brewers over publicans, by being proprietors of public-houses, &c. With all the regard which he felt for many gentlemen connected with the brewing business, this was a practice which he was aware, ought to be checked, if not abolished. Nothing was more clear than this, that brewers might meet

together, agree that they would not interfere with the houses which were held under the dominion of each; and in this manner they had it in their power to impose whatever trash they pleased on the poor—an expression which he did not like in the acceptance in which it was frequently received—more properly, on the laborious part of the community. What they had after labour was of as much consequence to their health, and to their existence, as food. It was, therefore, an object well deserving the interference of the legislature, to see that improper means were not resorted to, to disappoint them of it. The period of the session, however, would not allow time for so extensive a regulation. All that he now desired was to provide that a man, merely because he was a publican, should not be ruined, and his family turned on the parish, without having an opportunity of knowing what was charged against him. He concluded by moving, that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr. Moore recommended, as more inquiry seemed necessary, that the bill should be withdrawn, rather than let it go to a division.

Mr. Sheridan professed his disposition to yield to whatever appeared to be the general wish of the house, and therefore he should comply with the request of his hon. friend (Mr. Moore), to any suggestion from whom he should be always happy to attend. At the same time he could not help noticing the surprise expressed by the right hon. gentleman (the chancellor of the exchequer), that he should have brought forward this bill at so late a period of the session. What, said Mr. Sheridan, the right hon. gentleman, who has surprised the house and the country so much himself; he who has surprised the house at a late period of the session with his plan of government for Ireland; who has surprised it with his new military project; who has surprised it by proposing to suspend that highly laudable and universally praised system, the plan of enlisting for a limited time. And yet, after all that the right hon. gentleman should talk to me of surprising the house. But among all his surprises there was one surprise which he could not produce namely, that of surprising him (Mr. Sheridan) by opposing this bill; for he suspected it.

The right hon. gentleman proceeded to state the manner in which he had acted with a view to produce a satisfactory bill. First, he drew up a bill such as some gentlemen now professed

to wish for, combining the case of brewers owning public-houses with that before the house respectively ; but then objections arose, to which he yielded, in proposing to make those the objects of separate bills. Again, he proposed to make the bill general ; but to this very great difficulties were suggested ; he found many men, and magistrates particularly, who were willing to let him do what he pleased with Middlesex, and Surrey, provided he let the remainder of the country alone. He, therefore, endeavoured to make a beginning of that reform in those counties, which so many gentlemen have professed to desire to extend to all England. But a committee of inquiry was required previous to the introduction of such a bill as this. He, however, would beg those who desired such a committee, to reflect upon the expense and trouble that must attend such a committee ; to consider if witnesses were to be summoned from all parts of England, and Wales, what time such a committee must last, and when it was likely to end ? Each case would, in fact, be a suit before the committee, for he should propose to do that with regard to the magistrates, which they, under the existing law, declined to do towards the publicans ; that is, he should have the magistrates apprized of any ground of complaint urged against them, and afforded the opportunity of vindicating themselves. What time, then, would such an investigation occupy ? As to the cases he had adverted to upon this occasion, the right hon. gentleman stated, that they were but a few out of a large mass, and while gentlemen called for deliberation and delay, he could assure them and the house, that many persons were starving in jail in consequence of the law which he proposed to correct. There was one case in particular into which he believed a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Rose) had made inquiry, and which he knew was peculiarly oppressive, namely, that of Mrs. Unthank. The case of Mr. John Morris, a respectable man, who had a shop over the way in King-street, furnished the strongest grounds of complaint. This Mr. Morris, for whom, from his own knowledge of him, he could not hesitate to avow the utmost respect, was deprived of his license by the magistrates, merely because his house was to be taken down in order to make some coxcombical improvement about Westminster Abbey—to show that building to the members as they came down to the house. But he had communicated the case of Mr. Morris to the trea-

sury, and he hoped for redress. There was also one with regard to a Mr. Bignall, of the Broadway, Westminster whose license was withdrawn by the magistrates, upon grounds which they would not explain, and the poor man, finding every effort to procure redress unavailing, absolutely died of a broken heart about a fortnight since, leaving a helpless family to deplore his fate. With such facts before him, he did not think it too much to propose this temperate measure. However, as the opinion was so strongly expressed, that if such a bill was necessary, it should be made general, he should acquiesce in the wish for time to inquire into the subject. He hoped and trusted, that by the next session petitions would pour in from all quarters, praying the removal of the existing grievances, and that such petitions would be presented by the highest authority, by that of the county representatives of the respective petitioners. For himself, he should for the present only say, that which was only a repetition of what he had said before, that while he had a seat in that house, he should ever be found an advocate of the weak against the strong, and of the helpless against those who had the power, and he was sorry to say too often the will, to oppress them.

The bill was withdrawn.

AUGUST 13.

STATE OF IRELAND.

MR. SHERIDAN rose to make his promised motion, and spoke in substance as follows :—I rise, sir, under some degree of apprehension, that from the lateness of the hour, and the quantity of less important business which the house has already gone through, I may be felt to trespass on your attention ; but it was, I assure you, not less my intention this night, than it was on Monday, to address you at a much earlier hour of the evening, had other business permitted. The lateness of the hour on Monday was indeed one of the causes which induced me to postpone my motion until this evening ; and I cannot but regret that on this, the last day, nay, the last hour of the session, it should become necessary for me to arrest your attention ; because I know that, at such a time, to delay your sitting cannot be agreeable to your feelings or to your habits. I am aware that it must have somewhat of an ungracious appearance to postpone your

separation at such a season ; and believe me, I am as willing to enjoy the benefits of that separation as any one among you ; but I am too strongly impelled by a call of imperious duty to yield to any desire of accommodation. The necessity which gave rise to that call was not created by me ; nor was the postponement of the proposition I am about to submit, from Monday to this late period, by any means my fault. The propriety of adopting it is, to my conviction, rendered perfectly obvious by the circumstances of the two bills which you have recently passed with regard to Ireland. When you have determined to suspend the constitution and laws of Ireland, is it not reasonable to propose to you some inquiry into the causes alleged for such suspension, and how far such causes are removable ; is it not wise, when you are sending such acts to Ireland, to communicate at the same time such assurances of your resolution to take the state of that country into your consideration ? I am confident that such conduct would be at once consistent with policy and humanity, and that much of the apprehension and irritation which those acts of parliament may be naturally expected to produce, would be mitigated if accompanied by the adoption of a motion of the nature of that which I hold in my hand.

With regard to the intentions entertained by the last administration, to propose two acts similar to those I allude to, or to the character of the persons to whom the execution of the extraordinary powers which these acts confer, might be entrusted by either the late or the present government, it is my intention to say very little indeed. Because I do not wish to touch upon any topic of irritation, I will not enter much into comparisons. My hope and desire is to obtain an unanimous assent to the motion, as unanimity is necessary to give it complete effect. I shall abstain cautiously from anything that resembles invidious distinction. I know that to no set of men could power have been more safely confided than to the members of the late administration. I am sure, that in the hands of none, would power have been less liable to abuse ; and whatever my disinclination to comparison may be, to them cannot be denied this just distinction, that power might have been granted to them with the less reluctance, as they manifested a disposition to accompany its existence by every means of concession and conciliation. When I reflect in whom the power of these acts was to have been in-

vested in Ireland; when I consider that it was to have been exercised by the Duke of Bedford, who was not likely to call it into action, unless the necessity was irresistible, and who was in no case likely to abuse it, I must feel that he was peculiarly entitled to confidence. The character of that nobleman formed a guarantee against the apprehension of abused authority. But I have great respect for his successor also (the Duke of Richmond). I know that nobleman well enough, to be certain that he has no disposition to cruelty, that he has no malignant passion to gratify, and that he is above being affected by that gloomy suspicion, or party rancour, which might unnecessarily call for the execution, and materially embitter the operation of such power as these acts ordain. I have no doubt that this nobleman will follow the wise example, will be actuated by the same liberal principles which served to render his illustrious predecessor so much the object of panegyric and attachment. I should not, therefore, be very materially influenced as to a comparison of persons in power, as to my opinion of the manners and unconstitutional powers which characterise these bills. I am adverse to the principle of such measures, and could never be persuaded to accede to them, unless the necessity were strong and glaring indeed. Upon Monday last I had an opportunity of showing my motion to several gentlemen on both sides of the house, and had the satisfaction of observing a general disposition to concur in its principle and object. But some gentlemen expressing a wish for time to consider its structure and tendency, I was therefore for postponing the motion until this day, influenced by the request of those who required such a time, in the hope that consideration would serve to remove their doubts and secure their support. In this opinion, at least, I acquiesced in the proposed delay, that the effect of it would be to produce the proposition perhaps of some remedy for any defect in the motion; but that delay and deliberation must determine every man in favour of its main object. Retaining still a little of that hope and opinion, I do not think it necessary to take up so much of your time, by entering into a detail of the reasons which have induced me to bring forward the motion, and which should urge you to adopt it. Indeed, I cannot conceive a ground upon which the rejection of such a motion can be justified, and I am not bound to conjure up objections or anticipate arguments,

upon the strength of which no reasoning man can rely. It is impossible that any thinking man should seriously insist upon as an objection to any motion, that which I have heard on other occasions, namely, that danger was to be apprehended from the discussion of such affairs in this house ; that it is a topic which ought to be touched as little and as seldom as possible. But I deprecate such a ground of opposition, as full of error and mischief. You conceive that until we get completely rid of the folly and fallacy of such an objection, it will be quite impossible for us to apply a remedy to the disorders of that country, and for this obvious reason, that we cannot know the nature of their disorders. What ! that we should go on legislating for Ireland in the dark ; that we should reject light and information upon a subject to which we are called upon to apply the law, and that law too most penal and severe in its character !

When I hear the ministers of the crown declaring without shame, that they know nothing of the state of Ireland ;—when I hear the same declaration from the law officers ;—when, in fact, no man can speak decisively upon the subject, is it possible, I would ask, to devise a stronger argument than such declared ignorance suggests, to urge the united parliament to an investigation of this important question ? It is not consistent with even the decent appearance of respect for the rights, interests, and liberties of the people of Ireland, to legislate for that country in such total ignorance, or at least, such inconsistent contradictory information as we have before us. We have heard one set of gentlemen assert, that Ireland is perfectly tranquil, loyal, and united, and this assertion is corroborated by the authority of a noble lord (Hawkesbury) in the other house of parliament (a cry of “ order ” from the chair), then by a noble lord in another place ; and with such authority before us, is it right that the constitution of Ireland should be suspended ? But further in support of the allegation, that Ireland is undisturbed, and requires not such an act. I find that in a very populous county, where disaffection was supposed to exist, I mean Tipperary, Judge Fox at the late assizes congratulated the people upon the state of the calendar, upon the acknowledged tranquillity of the district, and upon the general good order of the county. I find that not a single charge of disloyalty, sedition, or treason, was to be seen on the calendar throughout the county.

I find at Kilkenny the public resolutions of the grand jury, testifying, not only the peaceable disposition of the county, but a general and cordial harmony between protestants and catholics, with a strong declaration from a body of the former in favour of the claims of the latter. All these testimonies appear on the one side ; on the other, to be sure, I hear a very high authority, an authority certainly of the highest character in my estimation, I mean the member for Dublin (Mr. Grattan). I hold his authority high, because I respect, not only his talents and information, but his integrity ; and I feel towards him as warmly as any resident of Ireland, the gratitude to which he is so eminently entitled, for obligations he has rendered to my country. Ministers, I perceive, are willing to ground their proceedings upon the authority of my right hon. friend ; under his great name they would shelter the creation of enormous powers, for which there may be no necessity. At all events, with the information I have received, both from public and private sources, I must contend that no necessity appears. Why, then, should we not inquire ? My object is to awake the house to what I conceive, with deference, to be a just sense of its duty ; to procure from it a pledge that an inquiry will be instituted, and thus to hold out to the people of Ireland some prospect of redress ; some assurance of the friendly disposition of the legislature. That inquiry is necessary, no man can deny ; and without full information, I must say, that it is not becoming in us to take such serious measures with regard to Ireland. We have, in fact, been legislating for that country upon hearsay and authority alone, and mark, with much more of hearsay and authority against, than for the cause you have pursued. All this, too, while you have had the means of ample inquiry within your reach. Upon what grounds, then, do you shrink from that inquiry ? It is preposterous to pretend that you fly from it, because you apprehend danger from discussing the affairs of that country. The fact is, that no topic requires or deserves more of your discussion or investigation ; so far from avoiding knowledge upon such a subject, it is highly culpable not to seek it. I profess myself as much in want of knowledge as other persons, and I take some blame to myself on that account ; but I shall endeavour by all means in my power to obtain information, and it is with a view to remove my own defect upon this head, as

well as the defects of others, that I wish for inquiry ; I wish for inquiry because it is essential, as well in respect to our own character, as in justice to the people of Ireland. It is our duty to inquire upon such an occasion, and we should not shrink from that duty through any objection to the trouble that might attend it, or through any idle fear of danger ; but least of all, through a timid apprehension of the truth. With regard to the motives that have urged me to stand forward upon this occasion, I have been prompted to it by duty and by feeling. My object is, to serve the cause of justice and my country, without exciting any passion, or flattering any prejudice. I hope I may take credit for being as little inclined as any man to the use of inflammatory language ; as little disposed to promote sedition, or mutiny, or disaffection. For this I think I am entitled to take credit. There is not, perhaps, a man more strongly convinced than I am, that the very existence of the two islands depends upon the continuance of their connection. I am quite assured, that if there be any party in Ireland of any denomination, which would advocate an opposite principle, that party is decidedly hostile to the interests of that country ; and should call forth the vigilance and vigour of the law. But I must say, that all appearances are against the belief of any such disaffection, much less of organized treason ; indeed, if I could imagine an observer totally free from prejudice upon the subject, his inference would, I am persuaded, be of quite an opposite tendency. If I could imagine a foreigner well disposed to Great Britain ; if I could believe such a foreigner to exist, I am satisfied he would be forward rather to congratulate Great Britain upon the present state of Ireland. There are four symptoms of loyalty and attachment to Great Britain visible in Ireland, which would naturally attract the attention of this foreigner. Having heard that the Duke of Bedford was applied to by some rash individuals to proclaim a county, at the time of the insurrection of the threshers, that noble duke rejected the application, and trusting to the ordinary operation of the law, put down the insurrection ; the foreigner would, in the first instance, consider this a very good symptom of the disposition of Ireland. Well, in the second place, he would be told that there had been no disturbances whatever in that country, since the Duke of Bedford had put down the insurrection alluded to, and that the disposition of the

people had been particularly proved by the rejection of the catholic bill. A short description of the nature of that measure would readily satisfy his mind, that the laying it aside, after it was promised, was very likely to have an irritating effect in Ireland; but, instead of irritation, he would witness the most perfect good order, although all the ingredients of insurrection were flung among the people, under the wrapper of a proclamation for dissolving parliament. The third object of the foreigner's attention would be Judge Fox's address of congratulation to the people of Tipperary, upon the peaceful state of the county; together with that judge's expression of surprise, that it should be otherwise described by any person; and the fourth symptom would more than all satisfy his mind, that no apprehension whatever could be entertained of disorders or insurrection in Ireland. For he would see the army taken away; he would see that formidable body, the German Legion, which was sent to Ireland to save it from sedition, embarked for the continent. Now, if this foreigner were to state these sentiments to the minister, and express his surprise that any suspicion could anywhere be entertained of the loyalty and tranquillity of the people of Ireland, what would that right hon. gentleman say to him? Perhaps the right hon. gentleman would tell him, that the Duke of Bedford acted injudiciously, in refusing to proclaim a county under martial law, and restoring the peace by means of the common law of the land; that the circumstances of Ireland being understood for some time back, was mere matter of accident; that Judge Fox knew nothing at all about the state of the country. But would not the foreigner be apt to ask, why, if Ireland were in such a state of disaffection, the military force should be taken away from it, and two oppressive and arbitrary bills sent there, still more to irritate that disaffection? Perhaps the right hon. gentleman might say, that he relied more upon these bills for preserving Ireland, than he did upon a military force; and when he marched out an army, he would march in an act of parliament; and when he withdrew a legion, he would substitute a law. But above all, what was the foreigner likely to say to the right hon. gentleman, when he found, that while every endeavour was using to arm the English, the Irish were disarming? With such a remarkable contrast before him, would not the foreigner, would not any man

interested for Great Britain, or possessing common sense, be disposed, particularly at a crisis when the invasion of a powerful enemy was to be apprehended, to put this plain question to the minister—"If you take away the arms of the Irish, what are they to fight with? and if you take away their constitution, what are they to fight for?" It has been said, that there exists a French party in Ireland; but when was it that such a party did not exist in that country? Since the days of Elizabeth, from the very commencement of those foul and tyrannous measures which originated in national jealousy, political prejudice, or religious dissension, but particularly the latter, which drove catholics of high spirit from their native country, numbers of such exiles found an asylum in France, and hence a correspondence between them and their relations in Ireland, which naturally led to the creation of a French party in Ireland, and an Irish party in France. But the existence of such a party cannot for a moment be insisted upon as a justification for the oppressive laws it was quoted to support. For what policy could be more mischievous and inhuman, than a perseverance in the same persecuting measures which originally created that party? Let the state of Ireland be inquired into; let persecution and injustice be put an end to, and the French party will soon cease to exist. But I cannot admit the danger of such a party in a political point of view. The correspondence of family connection may exist altogether independent of national attachments and prejudices, and perhaps this talked-of French party may consist solely of mere family connection, abstracted from all political views. At all events, there is no evidence upon the subject to direct the judgment of this house. There is, I must observe, a principle contained in the argument which the alleged existence of this party was adduced to support, that bears a most fearful character indeed for Ireland; for the Irish exiles having found an asylum in America, in Denmark, and other states, it would follow from the use made of this principle, that whenever Great Britain should be at war with either of these states, Ireland would be liable to have her constitution suspended, there being an American and a Danish party to be found in Ireland, as well as a French, and all arising from the same cause, which cause it is the tendency of the bills I have objected to, to continue and increase. The cause of

emigration and exile from Ireland has been considerably diminished under the auspices of our present most gracious sovereign ; but still a great deal remains to be done to reconcile the great body of the Irish to their country. What has been done was no doubt calculated to do much good, but yet it is to be recollected, that there is a great deal in the manner of doing a thing : there is such a case as conferring a favour without obtaining any acknowledgment ; of rendering a service without exciting any gratitude ; and such a case may be as making concessions when it is too late. I recommend these considerations to the reflection of ministers. When they and others complain of the discontents of the Irish, they never appear to consider the cause. When they express their surprise that the Irish are not contented, while, according to their observation, that people have so much reason to be happy ; they betray a total ignorance of their actual circumstances. The fact is, that the tyranny practised upon the Irish has been throughout unremitting. There has been no change but in the manner of inflicting it. They have had nothing but variety in oppression extending to all ranks and degrees of a certain description of the people. If you would know what this varied oppression consisted in, I refer you to the penal statutes you have repealed, and to some of those which still exist. There you will see the high and the low equally subjected to the lash of persecution ; and still some affect to be astonished at the discontents of the Irish. But with all my reluctance to introduce any thing ludicrous upon so serious an occasion, I cannot help referring to a little story which those very astonished persons call to my mind. It was with respect to an Irish drummer, who was employed to inflict punishment upon a soldier. When the boy struck high, the poor soldier exclaimed, “ lower, bless you,” with which the boy complied. But soon after the soldier exclaimed, “ higher, if you please.” But again he called out, “ a little lower,” upon which the accommodating boy addressed him— “ now, upon my conscience, I see you are a discontented man ; for, strike where I may, there’s no pleasing you.” Now your complaint of the discontents of the Irish appears to me quite as rational, while you continue to strike, only altering the place of attack. As to the conduct which ought to be pursued with respect to Ireland, don’t let it be imagined that I should not desire to have a strong armed force in that country. I would

have such a force stationed there, much as I rely on the loyalty of the people. But this force should be the protectors and advocates of the people. It should not be placed there to act as executioners, but as a guard of honour upon the constitution, the liberty, and the property of the people. I should not wish to have the fate of Ireland entrusted to an inadequate force, particularly at a period when no one can tell the hour at which the enemy may arrive. I would wish to have such a force in Ireland as in every other quarter of the empire, as should assure our foreign enemy of the impossibility of success ; and at the same time serve to discourage the operations of domestic enemies, by convincing them that it is in vain to hope ; that his prospects and calculations were vain. With this view and object, I would have a large army in Ireland ; and such an army would serve still more to render the bills I have referred to quite unnecessary. Because, if invasion or rebellion should take place, the peace of the country would be vested in the army. For it is a prerogative of the crown in such cases, to put the country under martial law, and in such cases only can martial law be necessary, particularly if you keep a large force in the country. The prerogative of the crown is fully competent to meet any real danger, without these bills, which are, in fact, nothing but martial law in masquerade. As to the plan of arming the people at large, which, it seems, is to be extended to Ireland ; although the principle is so perfectly congenial with the spirit of the British constitution—for it is a part of the king's prerogative to compel the people to arm in case of invasion or rebellion—I contend that the policy of disarming the Irish is bad, even for the purpose that measure professes to have in view ; for a people that are armed are generally, or almost always, more peaceable and less discontented, than those who are left defenceless and disarmed. If the king should, under his prerogative, call out the people of Ireland, or the sheriff were to summon the *posse comitatus*, in what state, I would ask, are that people likely to be found after the operation of those acts of parliament ? It is, however, pretended that these acts are only to continue for a certain time ; that they only involve a suspension of the constitution, in which the people have a reversionary interest. But I do not know when the suspension is to cease. It began in 1795, and since that it has continued without interruption, and the lease has just been renewed for

three years longer. I am of opinion, that the people who can submit so long to such a measure, must be tolerably well prepared for slavery. Indeed it cannot be difficult to reconcile them to the loss of freedom. In renewing the loan to government of the Irish constitution, I remember that ministers would not attend to the advice of my right hon. friend (Mr. Grattan) as to the duration of the lease. No, where his authority suited their view, they adopted it, and took shelter under it; but where that authority was against them, they rejected it. But the right hon. gentleman (the chancellor of the exchequer) has promised that the constitution shall be restored to Ireland. I should like to see a receipt and promise of return for a free constitution, from the hands of the right hon. gentleman. I dare say as a lawyer, a financier, and a statesman, it would be a curious production, running, perhaps, in these terms—"Whereas it has been deemed expedient for the peace and good of Ireland, for good and valuable considerations, to take the constitution of that country into the keeping of the crown. I, on the part of the crown, do promise and declare, that it shall be returned when it is deemed expedient." But suppose a project formed to withhold this constitution altogether; suppose it was resolved to establish absolute despotism, such as would justify the resistance of a free people; how is that resistance to be made, after the arms of the people have been taken away? What ministers ultimately mean to do with respect to Ireland, it is really difficult to divine. They promise, to be sure, to restore the constitution, and do many other things: but the people of Ireland know by whom the promise is made. They remember those who promised so much at the time of the union, and never kept their word in any one point; no, not one: indeed their conduct towards Ireland in this respect, puts me in mind of the promises made to children. The parent presents a favour to the view of the child, but declines to give it; no, no, the child would spoil it, and the parent keeps it for fear he should. Thus precisely are the people of Ireland trifled with as to promises; and thus are those promises fulfilled. How have they acted upon the subject of the catholic question? I am not now going into the discussion of that question; but was not the grant of that measure held out as one of the first consequences of the union? Such was to be collected from the words of several of the principal advocates of that measure, and, among

others, even Dr. Duigenan. Mr. Pitt and the noble lord (Castlereagh) held out a hope, upon their retirement from office in 1801, that their return to office might be deemed the signal for catholic emancipation. But yet they returned to office, and no such grant was proposed. Was not the frequent disappointment of the catholic body, their hopes deferred, one of the principle causes of the Irish discontents? Here Mr. Sheridan entered into a review of the conduct of the several members of the present cabinet with respect to the catholic question, and contrasted those who formerly promised so much to the catholics with those who had lately endeavoured to put an eternal bar to their hope, and who raised the abominable yell of “no popery!” There were some of the latter who were, no doubt, actuated by conscientious motives. He was most sincerely disposed to do credit to the motives of his Majesty, and had no doubt he was actuated by the purest precepts of conscience. In his honourable mind he was confident there existed as much abhorrence of the authors of any kind which could disunite and distract his subjects, as any man in the nation could feel. He had no hesitation in saying, that those men who would raise anything like eternal obstacles to the views of the catholics, must act disagreeably to him whose scruples upon the subject might be removed by time and consideration. The right hon. gentleman concluded this part of the subject by referring to the conduct of the last administration, whose promptitude in dropping the bill respecting the catholics he approved, perhaps, much more than he did of their original introduction of it. I think, said Mr. S., they began at the wrong end. They should have commenced the measure of redress in Ireland at the cottage, instead of at the park and the mansion. To have gone first to the higher orders of the catholics; to have sought to make them judges, and peers, and commoners; I do not know that such a proceeding, had it taken place, would not rather have served to aggravate discontent, as it might have been construed into a design to divide the interests of the catholics. Sure I am, that with a view to serve or to conciliate the catholic population, I mean the poor, the peasantry, its effect would be nothing; indeed, it would be quite a mockery. It would be like dressing or decorating the topmasts of a ship when there were ten feet water in the hold, or putting a laced hat on a man who had not a shoe to his foot. The place to set out to in Ireland for

the relief of the people, is the cottage. The distressed state of the peasantry must be first considered, and above all the tythes. I should hope that every man of good sense or good heart would be forward to devote some part of his attention to this important question. A great deal of information with respect to the state of the Irish peasantry, and the best means of relieving them, may be collected from private sources. I have had many communications on the subject, and I have looked into several valuable books and pamphlets respecting the Irish peasantry, but have been particularly interested by Mr. Bell's treatise upon them. It would not require much reading, after this book, to make gentlemen fully acquainted with the state, habits, and character of these poor peasantry, whose sufferings have so long and forcibly appealed to the humanity and justice of the legislature. I have heard it said, and I have been always shocked at the assertion, that the Irish peasantry might be comfortable if they chose to be industrious; and that it is idle to attempt any improvement in their condition. It is abominable to hear blame laid on Providence instead of laying it on man. Can any set of men, I would ask, be found, who manifest so much of the qualities of which these cruel calumniators would deprive them as the Irish peasantry? But they are only calumniated by those men who would degrade them below the level of the human creation, in order to palliate their own inhumanity towards them. We are told in England, that the unhappy Africans were insensible to the ordinary feelings of humanity, in order to render us indifferent to their sufferings, and to the custom of the slave-trade. On similar motives, the character of the Irish peasantry has been foully misrepresented by some men, both in this country and in Ireland also. But what palpable evidence do the Irish peasants, wherever you meet them, afford of the falsehood of their slanderers! Can any men exhibit more of enterprize than those peasants, in coming to this country in search of employment, or more of affection for country and family, in returning home with the pittance they earn here? Is it not manifest to every one of you, that the charge of indisposition to industry cannot apply to those poor men, who, in fact, do all the hard work of this metropolis? When the Irish exhibit such a character in this country, it is impossible that such a difference at home, as some gentlemen assert to exist, can proceed

from any other than gross misrule. If I were proposing this inquiry in time of profound peace, I should expect your acquiescence in it; but in the difficulties which now surround the country, the claim is, in my mind, irresistible. I know it has been the long hackneyed cant, that such and such is the most perilous period the country has ever known. But without any such cant, without any exaggeration whatever, I defy any man to show me a period in our history so full of peril; and where shall we look for aid? I am sick of continental alliances, of hearing about the magnanimous Alexander, &c. &c. When, however, I look at the conduct of that sovereign, triumphing at Petersburg upon acquisitions of territory plundered from Prussia, his ally, to whom, were he really magnanimous, he ought rather to have given territory, I cannot endure the idea of turning to the continent for anything to confide in for our existence. When I look at France, not, as Mr. Burke described it, a blank in the map of Europe; but when I see nothing almost but France; when I look to the state of the East Indies, and to that of the West also, I find, indeed, that on Monday you pledged yourself to inquire into the state of property in those islands, and very properly too. But when you thus pledge yourselves to inquire as to the property of the West India planters, is it too much for me to propose a pledge that you will take into consideration. not the property of the Irish, but their allegiance, liberty, and right? When I look at America—but in mentioning that country I should be sorry if understood at all to speak in terms ill calculated to encourage a disposition to surrender that privilege which we cannot resign, without abandoning our maritime power and importance—when I have thus reviewed the state of our colonies, connections, and allies, and find the appearance so gloomy, is it unreasonable that I should ask you to look at your statute-book, and to study the means of conciliating the alliance of your own subjects? While such menacing danger hangs over us, I cannot, without serious pain, reflect upon the manner in which you employ yourselves; one party charging the other, and *vice versa*; “You did that job.” “No, but you did worse.” “My plan required more recruits than your’s.” “No, but it did not;” as if men were recruiting for a wager, and the only object of debate was to criminate each other. I cannot think patiently of such petty squabbles, while Buonaparte is grasping the na-

tions ; while he is surrounding France, not with that iron frontier, for which the wish and childish ambition of Louis XIV. was so eager, but with kingdoms of his own creation ; securing the gratitude of higher minds as the hostage, and the fears of others as pledges for his safety. His are no ordinary fortifications. His martello towers are thrones; sceptrestipped with crowns are the palisadoes of his entrenchments, and kings are his sentinels. In such a state of the world, then, and with such an enemy, viewing this country as the only remaining object of his ambition to destroy, surely the policy of looking to all the means of strengthening yourselves is too obvious to require comment. Let me then exhort you to consider the means of rendering that country serviceable to you. I have heard of subsidies. Your subsidies to Prussia were considerable in amount, and yet quite unproductive in effect. Why do you not subsidize Ireland ? and all the subsidies I ask for her is your confidence, affection, and justice to her people. These I call upon you to grant before it be too late. If you refuse to see the danger that menaces, and will not consider in due time about the means which I propose to you for providing against it, it is a bad symptom. The first character of courage is to look at danger with a fearless eye, and the next to combat it with a dauntless heart. If, with this resolution, we front our dangers, history will do justice to our feelings and character, whatever may be the exertions or the success of the formidable tyrant who would destroy us, or of those who succeed to his power and views. The honest historian will not fail to yield a just tribute to our reputation. If faithful to ourselves, if united, we shall, in these two little islands, to which, as to an altar, freedom has flown for refuge, be able to fight with all the valorous fury of men defending a violated sanctuary.

The right hon. gentleman concluded with an animated exhortation to the house, to aim a blow at the fellest foe to British greatness and security, namely, internal discontent, by acceding to his motion. The right hon. gentleman then read his motion, which was as follows :—

“ That the house will, immediately on the meeting of the ensuing session of parliament, proceed to take into their most serious and solemn consideration, the state and condition of Ireland, in the anxious hope, that such measures and remedies may be

safely adopted in regard to the discontents alleged to exist in that country, as may render unnecessary the continuance of those provisions which the legislature of the United Kingdom has deemed it expedient reluctantly to adopt at the close of the present session, and the permanence of which would be a violation of the rights of the people of Ireland, and a subversion of the spirit and practice of our free constitution."

After he had read his motion, the right hon. gentleman expressed his readiness to acquiesce in any amendment, which should leave its main object untouched. It did not matter to him by whom the object was taken up. His desire was to have the thing done; and if any gentleman, on either side of the house, would follow it up, he would be entitled to the gratitude of Ireland, and he should have his warmest thanks.

Towards the close of the debate,

Mr. Sheridan rose amidst cries of "question," and expressed his hope that the house would indulge him with the privilege usually granted to persons who brought forward a motion, and hear his reply to such arguments as seemed to him peculiarly to call for attention. Of this privilege he would not avail himself at any length. First, then, he would have no objection whatever to alter his motion in the manner proposed by his right hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham) near him; and, indeed, to any alteration that did not destroy the substance of his motion, he had already pledged himself to agree.

[The speaker here interrupted the right hon. gentleman, and informed him that, consistently with the resolution of 1778, and the usages of the house, there could be no alteration in the motion after the previous question had been put.]

Mr. Sheridan, in continuation, observed that, in that case, he had no doubt the right hon. gentleman opposite would withdraw his motion, in compliance with the general wish of the house. He wished to have his answer. [No answer.] Well, the time for answering was not yet come perhaps. However, nothing in the world had been more misunderstood in this respect than the motion which he had submitted. Gentlemen seemed to suppose that he had censured the passing of the late bills, and thereby called upon the house to censure its own acts. He never had such intention, nor could his motion, by any one who took the trouble to attend to it, be supposed to carry any such meaning. He had distinctly declared in his speech that he

had now no such intention. But it might be said that, though not in his speech, it might be in his motion. What, then, was his motion? "That the house should take such measures as would render the provisions of the bills, lately with reluctance passed, unnecessary." What did his right hon. friend (Mr. Wyndham), and his hon. friend (Mr. Herbert) over the way, object to? They could not surely object to the word "reluctantly." His right hon. friend over the way said, that he would join with him if he would strike out the latter part of his motion. What was that? Why, that the permanency of such measures would totally destroy the constitution. Did any one object to this? Then he would be glad to see the man who would stand up in his place, and say that such enactments ought to be permanent; or that, if permanent, they do not completely overturn the constitution. These acts were to be in force for three years; and, under these circumstances, there was at least a reversion of the constitution. But, if you thought the permanency of such acts did not infringe the constitution, then you ought to make them permanent at once, for, in that case, where was the use of hesitation? Such enactments could not be considered in any other light than as an infringement of the constitution; and, therefore, it was the duty of every man to limit their duration, as much as the necessity of the case would allow.

He felt it necessary to make some observations on what had fallen from the hon. gentleman on the bench below him. With all the respect he had for that gentleman's (Mr. Lockhart) abilities; with all his deference to his means of information, and to the authority which he appeared to have with some, yet, not being intimately acquainted with the hon. gentleman, and not having an opportunity of observing those talents and information that had been ascribed to him by those who knew him better, he was perfectly excusable in not giving him that entire confidence that had been given by others. That hon. gentleman had said, that he had listened with great anxiety to his speech, because he expected that he (Mr. S.) would have first stated the evil, and then the remedy. The hon. gentleman might have listened to his speech with anxiety, but he had certainly done so with more anxiety than attention. He said, that he (Mr. S.) ought to have pointed out the grievance. Certainly not. He never thought that he was bound specifically to do that in the present instance.

When ministers came to him, asking him to give his assent to such regulations as these, the *onus probandi* lay on them. They were to show what grievances called for such measures, and that too before the measure was passed. "But no," said the hon. gentleman, "pass your bills first, and then let us hear of grievances." Inquiry ought to precede the passing of these enactments, and the necessity for them ought to have been proved. However, the house had passed the bills, and all he wanted now was, that they should give a pledge to inquire whether they had passed them on good grounds or not. This was all he asked. His object was to keep this subject perpetually before the house. If the bills had been enacted only for a year, there would have been less cause for his motion. But as the period of their duration extended to three years, his object was, and he hoped the result of an inquiry would be unnecessary, to continue them for more than one year. This he was, for his own part, persuaded, would turn out to be the case, unless gentlemen chose to continue in ignorance, and rejected the means of acquiring information. But the hon. gentleman dwelt a good deal upon general doctrine, and said that a boon ought not to be granted till you were strong, and had enabled yourselves to crush your petitioners if you chose! He had really thought that men could distinguish between good and bad treatment, and that the one produced gratitude and attachment as naturally as the other caused revenge and hatred! "But no," said the hon. gentleman, "make them fear you first, that they may love you afterwards?" Then the hon. gentleman accused him of having said that Ireland had been used worse than a conquered country. Certainly, he had said that England had adopted a more ignorant and barbarous system of management with respect to Ireland, than ever any one nation with any pretensions to civilization, had adopted with respect to another. The hon. gentleman said, that he was taken aback with regard to his statement, when he allowed that concessions had been made in the present reign, and consequently the system changed. This, he supposed, was meant, for he did not pretend to understand the phrase "*taken aback*," not being a naval man, as the hon. gentleman probably was. That the concessions had been made with a very ill grace, he had certainly said. He did not wish, as he said before, to produce any irritation whatever; but if the times and circumstances when these

concessions were made were considered, it would be found that they had been wrung from most unwilling minds, rather than conferred in an open, liberal, and generous manner. He deprecated waiting for such terms and circumstances. He was conferring favours when they might be ascribed to a sense of generosity and justice, and not for waiting till they could be demanded, when you would not dare to refuse them. Now his right hon. friend (Mr. Grattan) on the bench near him, had made a more able speech in favour of his motion than he himself could possibly do. That speech was characteristic of his wonted genius and eloquence, and everything must be full of genius, animation, and eloquence that came from him. This very speech was one great instance of the benefits to be derived from the motion now submitted to the house; for his right hon. friend had, in the course of it, thrown out more information respecting the state of Ireland, than ever had been communicated by any other member, or at any period for some time past. But another member accused him of libelling the legislation of this country, and our cosmopolitan and philanthropic parliament! But what had our most philanthropic parliament done for Ireland? Why, they legislated without inquiry for that country; but if his motion had been proposed and agreed to two or three years ago, parliament would have been better able to have legislated for Ireland. For the proof of this he would only refer to the speech of his right hon. friend, who had exposed the abuses with respect to tythes, the non-residence of the clergy, and state of the Protestant schools. The hon. gentleman seemed to be mightily offended at his saying that government had not been attentive to Ireland. For a proof of this too, he referred to the speech of his right hon. friend (Grattan) who had stated that 10,000 acres of land only supported eighteen Protestant schools; and yet, with all this before them, some gentlemen pretended that the government had paid the requisite attention to the state of Ireland. He hoped, however, that an attention of a different sort would be given it. Ireland expected this; England expected it; and the result, he had no doubt, would be beneficial to both countries. His right hon. friend had adverted to the state of tythes in Ireland, and from the ill-constructed method of collecting and managing these, had deducted a great part of the evils under which Ireland laboured. The "hearts of steel," the "white boys," the

“bright boys,” and threshers,” all arose from tythes, which appeared the most cruel of the burthens under which the lower ranks of people in Ireland groaned. Why then, did not this sufficiently account for the disaffection in Ireland, without having recourse to the idea of a French faction? His right hon. friend admitted the general loyalty of the people of Ireland; but still said there was a French party in Ireland: a French party, but contemptible; a miserable faction, destitute of talents and energy, and of trifling numbers. What he wanted then was, to have the nature of this danger ascertained, to see in what it consisted, to find out the strength of this French faction, and if so contemptible as his right hon. friend had said, to apply a remedy equal to the disease, and not to overturn the whole constitution of the country on account of a wretched faction. His right hon. friend had compared the general loyalty of Ireland and her French faction, to a beauty with a pimple on her face; a very gallant illustration, and one that must certainly be admired by Irishmen. But if he (Mr. S.) were to give his advice to this beauty, he would say to her, “my lovely charmer, put a patch on that pimple, but do not cover your whole face with a mask.” Apply this to Ireland. Were the whole of the loyal Irish to be deprived of their liberties, because there existed a contemptible French faction? Let the remedy meet the evil, but no more; let not the foul mask of despotism cover the land, but let liberty bloom in all her beauty, where there existed a soil in which she was capable of flourishing. It had been said, that now, in this difficult crisis, was the time for the catholics to show their loyalty and attachment to the constitution, and their worthiness to enjoy its benefits! But this was beginning at the wrong end. If you want the attachment of the Irish, begin by giving them some reason to love you. If you want them to fight your battles, give them something to fight for. But the other way, to deprive them of their constitution in the mean time, was

“Propter vitam, vitæ perdere causas.”

You asked them for bravery, and took away the motives to it. You asked for loyalty, and bid them contend for their laws and liberties, and at the same time deprived them of the benefits of the constitution. But his right hon. friend said, that they were only deprived of this for a time, and that they would have their liberties again after they had achieved some acts that would show

their zeal and loyalty. He had a different view of this subject. He wished to give them the motives to act, before he sent them to action. But why was this proof required of the Irish catholics? Had they not already given it? Where, by sea or by land, had they failed to do their duty? When had they shrunk in the moment of invasion? When had they been deficient in expressions of loyalty and attachment to the constitution? And when have their words been falsified by their actions? Yet his hon. friend seemed to think, that proofs of their loyalty and zeal for the constitution were wanting? You must, however, trust the catholics; you must have them in your Irish militia. Why then suspect them, and subject them to penalties without cause? He might be wrong in this; but if that was so, let it be proved. His right hon. friend close by him (Mr. Wyndham), had said, that he seemed to hold the concessions to the Roman catholics cheap. He certainly had never done so, and his right hon. friend was mistaken. He had said, that if what was called catholic emancipation was granted without some other measures in favour of the poorer classes, it might excite envy and jealousy in them. The benefits to them they would consider as not running *pari passu* with those to their superiors, and certainly without some caution what was intended to promote harmony, might become the excitement to contention. But what did the bill proposed by the late administration in favour of the catholics do? It certainly did a great deal indeed, when it proposed to abolish the restriction on the Roman catholic officer when he came to a certain rank; an officer who stood in this singular situation, that he rose till he had an opportunity of doing some act worthy of preferment; and however great the services he might perform, there he stopped, and the disabilities under which he laboured damped his ardour, and rendered him less fit or disposed for enterprise and exertion. The unfortunate catholic officer might, therefore, be said to rise to his degradation. The removal of such restrictions were doing much, and the best effects would certainly have followed from the adoption of such a measure. Was it not better to put confidence in the Irish than to bind them down by restrictions? The enemy might hope to break their chains, but they could not expect to turn towards them those hearts that had been conciliated by kindness and confidence. Instead, therefore, of putting them on trial, his wish certainly

would be, to give them the benefits of the constitution before they mustered in the field. Instead of the yoke of slavery, he would hang the privilege of the constitution about their necks, and arm them with their rights. Without this, it was impossible to expect that the Irish catholics should be so cordial in their loyalty and attachment to the constitution as they would otherwise be. He had heard nothing more that appeared to him to require any particular observation. But he again repeated, that if no other good effect should result from this motion, than an acknowledgment on the part of parliament, of the importance of the subject, the motion ought to be adopted. Charles the First asked Selden, "What was the best way to put down a rebellion?" to which Selden answered, "Remove the cause." He begged of the government to apply this answer to Ireland, and put an end to the disaffection there, by removing the cause. He would keep his word, and trespass no longer on the indulgence that had been granted him.

The house divided—for the motion 33 ; against it 76.

JUNE 15, 1808.

AFFAIRS OF SPAIN.

MR. SHERIDAN rose to call the attention of the house to the affairs of Spain. It had been proposed to him to put off the subject, on the ground, that the gentlemen from that country now residing here, were this day gone to partake of the hospitality of his right hon. friend the secretary of state for foreign affairs. He believed, however, with all the enthusiasm they must naturally feel on such a subject, they would be equally well entertained with his right hon. friend's dinner, as they would have been with listening to what he had to say. He could, therefore, on that ground, feel no hesitation in persevering in the motion of which he had given notice. He understood, besides, that his right hon. friend had dispatched a general belonging to Ireland, to represent him at this entertainment. That these noble foreigners would feel themselves particularly happy in the company of that gallant officer, he could have no doubt; the more especially as it was understood, that his right hon. friend had not sent him to represent himself at his hospitable board alone, but that he was also to be sent to represent this

country in fighting the battles of Spain, where he (Mr. Sheridan) was satisfied his services would be unfeigned. He begged leave to correct an idea that seemed to have gone abroad, that he meant to make an harangue or exhortation to ministers on this subject. Nothing was further from his intention. He simply meant to call the attention of ministers, and of the house, to the subject, not to lecture them into it. All that he had to say, he had communicated some days ago to his right hon. friend. The right hon. and learned gentleman opposite (Mr. Perceval), did not give credit to this; and he had also had the misfortune to fall under the odium of his hon. friend near him, as if by his present notice he had meant to save government from all responsibility on the subject. Thus, on one side, he had been suspected of wishing to injure, on the other to save from any subsequent stigma, the existing government. In neither of these conjectures, however, was there any truth. Notwithstanding the high opinion he had of the probity, zeal, ability, and estimable qualities of his hon. friend (Mr. Whitbread), and with all his promptitude for business, he could not say that he was particularly distinguished by a promptitude to go into the opinions of others, or to doubt his own judgment. His hon. friend must therefore excuse him, if he did not, on the present occasion, yield to his recommendation. He had no other desire but to bring under discussion a subject to which the attention of the people of England was called at the present important moment. He did not ask ministers to embark in any foolish or romantic speculation; but he was satisfied there never was a time, since the commencement of the French revolution, taking it for granted, that the flame would spread—there never was, he was satisfied, so great an opportunity and occasion for this country to strike a bold stroke, which might end in the rescue of the world. It might be asked, if he was inclined to trust to the conduct and prudence of ministers, why did he bring the matter before parliament? He confessed that he was not friendly to ministers; but still this was not a subject for party. He therefore wished to express his opinion to ministers, and that opinion was, that they should not deal in driblets; but if they could not do much, that they should do nothing. There never was, he believed, in this country, a government, except during the administration of his dear friend, now no more, (Mr. Fox), in which one object

only was pursued. When they should have been aiming a blow at the heart of France, there was always something else to distract the attention ; when they should have been at the core of the heart, they were always found nibbling at the rind. There was hardly a single person, except his right hon. friend near him (Mr. Wyndham), and Mr. Burke, who, since the revolution of France, had formed adequate notions of the necessary steps to be taken. The various governments which this country had seen during that period, were always employed in filching for a sugar island, or some other object of comparatively trifling moment, while the main and principal pursuit was lost sight of and forgotten. Let Spain see that we were not inclined to stint the services we had it in our power to render her ; that we were not actuated by the desire of any petty advantage to ourselves ; but that our exertions were to be solely directed to the attainment of the grand and general object, the emancipation of the world. He again repeated, let not our assistance be given in dribblets. But he also again repeated, let it not be romantically and foolishly bestowed. Let it be seen that the enthusiasm of the people had been fairly awakened ; without which our efforts could avail nothing. But if the flame were once fairly caught, our success was certain. France would then find, that she had hitherto been contending only against principalities, powers, and authorities, but that she had now to contend against a people. The right hon. gentleman said he brought nothing on for discussion ; he only wished to call the attention of ministers to a subject in which the feelings of the people of this country were so deeply interested. If they acted properly, they might depend on having his most steady and sincere support. Would any man tell him that there was no use in agitating a question of this kind ? Would it not be known in Spain, and would it not preserve and even rouse the spirit of the people of that country to know, that the unanimous voice of parliament, as well as of the people of Great Britain, was raised in their favour, and their cordial assistance and co-operation ready to be afforded them ? Was he, then, to be told, if an opportunity should arise of affording effectual aid to Spain, that it was not of importance that the subject had been agitated in that house ? He had entire confidence in the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Canning), that nothing on his part would be wanting. The crisis was the most impor-

tant which could be conceived : the stand made in the Asturias was the most glorious. He hoped that the progress of it would be closely watched, and not a single opportunity lost of adding vigour and energy to the spirit which seemed to exist there. The symptoms could not be long in showing themselves, their progress must be rapid ; probably the very next despatch might be sufficient to enable a decisive opinion to be formed. If the flame did not burn like wildfire, it was all over. He hoped ministers would act as circumstances required ; and if so, they should, as he had already said, receive his support. He concluded by moving, “ that an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to direct, that there be laid before this house copies of such proclamations as have been received by his Majesty’s secretary of state for foreign affairs, and which have been issued since the arrival of the French army at Madrid, whether by the Spanish government, the French commander-in-chief, or by persons since claiming to act on behalf of the Spanish nation.

The motion was afterwards withdrawn.

JUNE 17.

CARNATIC QUESTION.

MR. SHERIDAN felt that, after the personal allusions so frequently made to him, he should not act respectfully towards the noble lord (Castlereagh), if he continued silent on the present occasion. The noble lord concluded a speech, filled with the strangest and most monstrous doctrines he had ever heard, with a solemn appeal to the justice of the house, calling upon it not to establish so bad a moral as that of exposing the delinquency of public servants, for fear their conduct should be compared with the enormities of our enemies. It was with reluctance he entered on any of the enormities committed in India. In making such a declaration, the noble lord was not aware of the libel which he pronounced on an hon. friend of his, who was lately chief-justice in India. Here Mr. Sheridan quoted a speech delivered at the time of Mr. Hastings’s impeachment, by Mr. (now Sir John) Anstruther, in which that gentleman dwelt on the enormities practised in India, and insisted on the necessity of investigation and punishment. But now the house was to

understand, from the speech of the noble lord, that no governor in India, let his crimes be ever so great, was to have his conduct at all inquired into. He maintained, that the best way to hold out to the world that we practised no enormities, was not to punish those who committed them. The noble marquis, whose conduct was now the subject of discussion, had lately made an observation, that the attack upon Copenhagen, and the seizure of the Danish fleet, was an event at which Englishmen ought to rejoice, because it would grieve Buonaparte. It was unwise in the noble marquis to make such a declaration; because he believed it to be entirely the reverse of what was the fact. He sincerely believed that Buonaparte never felt more joy at any event than what this act of ours gave him. In that act he saw our character blended with his own. He found in it an indemnity for the past, and a security for the future. The noble lord's code of political morality was the worst he had ever heard broached in that house. His desultory term "Will o' the wisp" speech had not put down a single argument advanced by his learned friend, to whom he felt grateful for the sentiments he delivered. He did not feel a wish to say any thing uncivil towards the noble lord, particularly so after the very handsome manner in which the noble lord spoke of him the evening before last. But he should have supposed, had he not known his assiduity, the noble lord had never read the papers relative to this subject. He had said that Ally Hussein had forfeited his right to the throne, inasmuch as he inherited the treason of his father. He could never have been a party to a treason which had not been communicated to him, and with which the father had not been charged in his life time. He never knew a more monstrous attempt than this to impose on the credulity of the public. There was no analogy in this case to that of the house of the Stuarts, in which a country chose its own magistrates, which every people had a right to do; but here was an independent prince, who was an ally; and what right had any man to say, that we should dismiss from the throne of his ancestors the lawful heir to that throne, against whom no charge whatever could be made? But what became of all this argument, when the fact is, that Azeen ul Dowlah was put on the musnud over the son of a person who was actually proved to be an enemy to the British interests? The noble lord showed the grossest ignorance of the papers; for the very correspondence he

referred to was carried on with the consent of the government of Madras. As to the cypher, he appealed to the hon. baronet who was chief-justice in India, and would ask, if he would suffer a man to be convicted on such evidence? (Sir John Anstruther signified that he would not.) He was happy to hear his hon. friend say he would not. Yet it was on such evidence, that an innocent young prince was deprived of his throne, and placed in a situation in which he lost his life. Mr. Sheridan then read some correspondence, in order to show that the British government in India considered it as likely to be favourable to their interests, to have an intimate correspondence and connection carried on between the house of Arcot and the Mysore. It was attempted to justify this transaction, on the ground of state necessity. But this act of injustice and robbery could not be an act resulting from state necessity, because there existed no necessity for it, or at least none had been shown to influence their decision. Here Mr. Sheridan read some papers, to show the steady attachment of the nabob to the English; and he defied any governor to say, that there existed the slightest proof of the hostility of the father or the son, except what was extracted from the trash found at Seringapatam. The arguments that had been used to prove that the nabob was considered as a vassal to the India company, were as unjust as they were unfounded. The important documents on the table put that question out of all doubt, for it would appear by an address actually signed by his Majesty, countersigned by Lord Cornwallis, and addressed to the nabob, dated the 13th of May, 1790, that he was considered not only as an independent sovereign, but actually called the "faithful ally and friend" of the British government in India. Here the right hon. gentleman read a long extract from the address alluded to, from which it likewise appeared that the very first acre of ground the English became possessed of round Madras, was acquired through the friendship of the nabob of Arcot; yet he asked, after such an unqualified declaration under his Majesty's own hand, of the independency of this prince, if such degrading language was to be held out? Was it to be endured for one single moment, that the rights and laws of nations were to be thus trampled upon with impunity, merely upon the alleged policy of the measure? From a very patient perusal of the very important documents on the table, they established this proposition in his mind, that there

was no ground whatever for any suspicion of the faithfulness of the nabob of Arcot and his son towards the British government. There was one part of this question which he could not but consider as a great dereliction of principle in the noble marquis. It was said that he took every possible care for the protection of Ally Hussein, the deposed nabob. Could it be thought for a moment, that the deposed nabob would be safe in the hands of a man who threatened him with instant death if he ever attempted to regain the throne of his father? From these circumstances he concluded, that the young nabob was not safe in those hands. He did not feel disposed to enter into all the motives that might have actuated the noble marquis in his conduct, and he was less disposed to argue the accusation urged against him of his being actuated by pecuniary interests in his administration; but looking at his general conduct as a governor of India, he must say there was no parallel in the history of that country which presented so unbridled an instance of insatiable ambition. The sum total of what the country knew of his conduct as governor was, that he succeeded to the government after Lord Cornwallis. He found India in a great and increasing state of prosperity. He found a system of equity and economy in the public expenditure, admirably calculated for the solidity of our establishment in that country. But when he left it, he left behind him an example of the most pernicious prodigality and profuseness; when he landed, he found a disposition in the company's servants to revere the laws, and to abide the decrees of his Majesty; but when he left it, the utmost contempt prevailed of the laws and regulations of the company. When he went there, the native powers of India placed the utmost confidence in the faith of the British government; but he left them entertaining in their minds the most irreconcilable sentiment of disgust and enmity, on account of its treachery and oppression. In short, the result of the noble lord's administration was this, that when he went to India, he found Great Britain without a foe; and when he departed, he left Great Britain without a friend. Upon these grounds he felt he was called upon to say thus much, not from any personal enmity to the noble marquis, but from a principal of preserving his own consistency. He took this opportunity of defending himself from the insinuation thrown out by the noble lord (Castlereagh) in the commencement of his speech, that he had departed from

principle in seeming to neglect the cause he had so strenuously undertaken to advocate on former occasions, by stating that his sentiments upon this subject had never been in the least altered, from the first intimation he received of the oppression and tyrannous dethronement of the young nabob, and the subsequent information that arrived in this country of his murder. On that occasion his mind was so horrified by the atrocity of the act, that he resolved himself immediately to institute an inquiry into the causes of so gross a violation of the laws of civilization and humanity. Circumstances, however, had prevented him from carrying the desired object completely into effect personally. He saw no prospect then of pursuing the investigation in that administration, and from these considerations he did not press it. He had, however, moved from time to time for a great number of documents, which must remove at once every suspicion of his having cooled in the cause. He concluded by declaring his fixed determination, at all times, never to shrink from the task he had imposed upon himself, of representing the noble marquis's conduct in the plain and unvarnished manner in which he fully persuaded himself the various documents on the table exhibited the circumstances of his administration to the country.

THE END.





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